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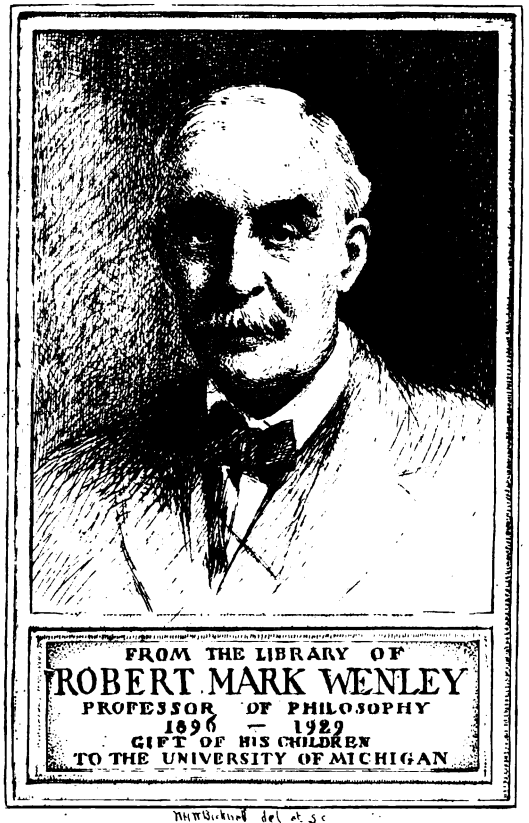

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The Natural Truth of Christianity.

THE NATURAL TRUTH

OF

CHRISTIANITY:

SELECTIONS FROM THE "SELECT DISCOURSES"

OF

JOHN SMITH, M.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

EDITED BY W. M. METCALFE.

ALEXANDER GARDNER, PAISLEY;
LONDON: 12 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1882.

12-19-38

1-14-39 JA.

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INTRODUCTION.

"JOHN SMITH—born in 1618, near Oundle, in Northamptonshire—was admitted a scholar of Emanuel College at Cambridge in 1636, a fellow of Queen's College in 1644. He became a tutor and preacher in his college; died there, 'after a tedious sickness,' on the 7th of August, 1652, and was buried in the college chapel. He was one of that band of Cambridge Platonists, or *latitude men*, as in their own day they were called, whom Burnet has well described as those 'who, at Cambridge, studied to propagate better thoughts, to take men off from being in parties, or from narrow notions, from superstitious conceits and fierceness about opinions.' Principal Tulloch has done an excellent work in seeking to reawaken our interest in this noble but neglected group.* . . . . Placed between the sacerdotal religion of the Laudian clergy on the one side, and the notional religion of the Puritans on the other, they saw the sterility, the certain doom, of both;—saw that stand permanently such developments of religion could not, inasmuch as Christian-

* *Rational Theology, etc., in the Seventeenth Century.* Edinburgh, 1874.

ity was not what either of them supposed, but was a *temper*,—a *behaviour*.

Their immediate recompense was a religious isolation of two centuries. The religious world was not then ripe for more than the High Church conception of Christianity on the one hand, or the Puritan conception on the other. The Cambridge band ceased to acquire recruits, and disappeared with the century. Individuals knew and used their writings; Bishop Wilson of Sodor and Man, in particular, had profited by them. But they made no broad and clear mark. And this was in part for the reason already assigned. . . . . It is not so much a history of this group which is wanted, as a republication of such of their utterances as show us their real spirit and power. Their spiritual brother, 'the ever memorable Mr. John Hales,' must certainly, notwithstanding that he was at Oxford, not Cambridge, be classed along with them. The remains of Hales of Eton, the sermons and aphorisms of Whichcote, the sermon preached by Cudworth before the House of Commons, with the second sermon printed as a companion to it, single sayings and maxims of Henry More, and the *Select Discourses* of John Smith,—there are our documents! In them lies enshrined what the *latitude men* have of value for us. . . . . Given some day, and by some hand, it will surely be.

For Hales and the Cambridge Platonists here offer, formulated with sufficient distinctness, a conception of

religion, true, long obscured, and for which the hour of light has at last come. Their productions will not, indeed, take rank as great works of literature and style. It is not to the history of literature that Whichcote and Smith belong, but to the history of religion. Their contemporaries were Bossuet, Pascal, Taylor, Barrow. It is in the history of literature that these men are mainly eminent, although they may also be classed, of course, among religious writers. What counts highest in the history of religion as such, is, however, to give what at critical moments the religious life of mankind needs and can use. And it will be found that the Cambridge Platonists, although neither epoch-making philosophers nor epoch-making men of letters, have in their conception of religion a boon for the religious wants of our own time such as we shall demand in vain from the soul and poetry of Taylor, from the sense and vigour of Barrow, from the superb exercitations of Bossuet, or the passion-filled reasoning and rhetoric of Pascal.

The *Select Discourses* of John Smith, collected and published from his papers after his death, are, in my opinion, by much the most considerable work left to us by this Cambridge school. They have a right to a place in English literary history. Yet the main value of the *Select Discourses* is, I repeat, religious, not literary. Their grand merit is that they insist on the profound ***natural truth*** of Christianity, and thus base it upon a ground which will not crumble under our feet. Signal

and rare indeed is the merit, in a theological instructor, of presenting Christianity to us in this fashion. Christianity is true; but in general the whole plan for grounding and buttressing it chosen by our theological instructors is false, and since it is false, it must fail us sooner or later. I have often thought that if candidates for orders were simply, in preparing for their examination, to read and digest Smith's great discourse *on the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion*, together with M. Reuss's *History of Christian Theology at the time of the Apostles*, and nothing further except the Bible itself, we might have, perhaps, a hope of at last getting, as our national guides in religion, a clergy which could tell its bearings and steer its way, instead of being, as we now see it, too often conspicuously at a loss to do either."

So writes our most accomplished critic, through whose kind permission I am able to use the above as an introduction to this volume. Any other recommendation of Smith's writings the reading world will not require, and a better I do not think the religious world can obtain. Though not a theologian, in his delightful volumes dealing with the interpretation of Scripture Mr. Arnold has exhibited a clearness of insight and a flexibility of thought and expression which, if more largely possessed and used by our professional theologians and commentators, would

* This passage by M.A. first pub. in Contemp. Rev. Nov. 1876.

commend religion to a wider circle, and make the Bible a more intelligible and influential book. With the old *latitude men* I believe he has many points of likeness; and of modern books I know none which are so well calculated as *Literature and Dogma*, *God and the Bible*, and *St. Paul and Protestantism*, "to take men off from being in parties, or from narrow notions, from superstitious conceits and fierceness about opinions," and to direct the energies they now expend on religion, or on so-called "religious movements," to better purpose. The more I see of the religious world, the more firmly am I persuaded that it is on a wrong tack, and that what the Church most needs in the present is to insist less on the metaphysics of religion and more on clearness and charity of thought and beneficence of life.

Of Smith and his writings I shall have occasion to speak immediately. Here I would only say that this volume has not been prepared for scholars. By them, the splendid edition of the *Select Discourses* prepared by the Rev. H. G. Williams for the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press will naturally be consulted. My endeavour in the following pages has been to present Smith in a form suitable for popular reading. The only liberties taken with his text are those of omitting what seemed to have little value for the present, and of translating a number of quotations made from ancient authors in the original. I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Williams, to Principal Tulloch's

admirable volumes on the *Rational Theology of England in the Seventeenth Century*, and especially to Mr. Matthew Arnold for permission to make use of the long extract from his *Last Essays on Church and Religion* given above.

Should the demand for this volume warrant the undertaking, I propose to prepare a companion to it from the writings of Whichcote, More, Cudworth, Hales, Culverwel, etc.

W. M. M.

MEMOIR.

I.

THE life of JOHN SMITH, the author of the "Select Discourses," was of short duration and singularly uneventful. In the politics and controversies of his day he does not appear to have taken any part. From his twentieth year he seems to have spent his time either among his books, or in the quiet and unostentatious discharge of his academical duties.

The son of John and Catharine Smith, he was born at Achurch near Oundle in Northamptonshire, in the beginning of the year 1616.* At the time of his birth his parents were advanced in years.† When but a few months old he had the misfortune to lose his mother. His father, a farmer, and probably a small landowner, who resided at Achurch, seems to have been a man of considerable integrity, and to have enjoyed the respect

* Hailes says 1618. The date given above is taken from the Parish Register of Achurch. See the Memoir prefixed to the "Select Discourses," (Cambridge, 1859), p. v., n. 2, to which I am indebted for most of the particulars here given.

† Patrick's Funeral Sermon, printed at the end of the "Select Discourses.

of those among whom he lived, being several times appointed to the office of church-warden.

The rudiments of his education, SMITH in all probability received at the Grammar School at Oundle, the establishment of which dates back to about fifty years before his birth. On the 5th of April, 1636, when just entering on his twentieth year, he was sent to the University of Cambridge, and entered as a Sizar of Emmanuel College.* Cudworth and Culverwel were already there; the former having entered in the year 1630,† and the latter in 1635 ;‡ while at Christ's Church College, Henry More § had been a student for five years. But by far the most remarkable, though by no means the best known of those whom our author met at Cambridge, and the one whose influence upon him was the most direct and powerful, was Benjamin Whichcote. At the time of SMITH's admission, he was Fellow and Tutor of Emmanuel College. A man of rare powers as a teacher, and of admirable temper, he was just rising into notice, and had lately begun that course of teaching, which, while it brought him into collision with the Puritanical party, made him the head of that "new set of men," who, "at Cambridge,"

* From this Principal Tulloch infers that his father had Puritan leanings. Rat. Theol. ii. 123.

† Birch's Life.

‡ Light of Nature, xv., (Edin., 1857.)

§ Rat. Theol., ii. 308.

as Burnet tells us, "studied to propagate better thoughts," and, but for whom, "the church had quite lost her esteem over the nation." *

It was SMITH'S good fortune to obtain Whichcote for his Tutor. Between the two a warm and lasting friendship grew up. SMITH, from whose notes, taken while a student, many of Whichcote's sermons were printed, was in the habit of saying "he lived upon Dr. Whichcote." † With a generosity by which he seems to have been distinguished, Whichcote assisted the somewhat straitened means of our Northamptonshire student with his purse, a kindness which SMITH was always ready to cheerfully acknowledge. This is almost the only biographical fact of importance which comes out in the somewhat rhetorical "Address to the Reader," prefixed by Dr. Worthington to the "Select Discourses." His words are worth quoting, as they furnish almost the only glimpse we have of our author during this period of his life. "I knew him," says Worthington, "for many years, not only when he was a Fellow of Queen's College, but when a student in Emmanuel College, where his early piety, and the remembering his Creator in those days of his youth, as also his excellent improvement in the choicest parts of learning endeared him to many, particularly to his careful tutor, then Fellow of Emmanuel College, afterwards Provost of

* History of his own Times, i. 272, (Edin., 1753.)

† Whichcote's Aphorisms, p. xviii. (London, 1753.)

King's College, Dr. Whichcote, to whom, for his directions and encouragements of him in his studies, his seasonable support and maintenance when he was a young scholar, as also upon other obliging considerations, our author did ever express a great and singular regard." *

At the usual time for students of his standing, the year 1639, SMITH, from some unexplained cause did not graduate. He took his Bachelor's degree in the year 1640, and his Master's in 1644. The probable consequence of this was that, in his own college, he was precluded from all prospect of advancement, William Dillingham, also a native of Northamptonshire, whose admission into Emmanuel College was only a few days earlier than his own, having been elected to a Fellowship in the College in 1642, and the original statutes then in force, but since remodelled, ordaining that no two natives of the same county should hold Fellowships at the same time. † He seems, indeed, to have had little desire for advancement. "He was contented," as Simon Patrick, afterwards Bishop of Ely, remarks, "in the condition wherein he was. He made not haste to rise and climb . . . . , but proceeded leisurely by orderly steps, not to what he could get, but to what he was fit to undertake," desiring rather "to deserve honour than to be honoured." ‡

* "Select Discourses," p. xv.

† Dillingham afterwards became Provost of the College. He edited Culverwel's "Discourse of the Light of Nature."

‡ "Select Discourses," 512.

On the 11th day of April, 1644, the Earl of Manchester, acting in virtue of the powers entrusted to him by a Committee of Parliament, appointed our Author, along with eight others, Fellows of Queen's College, in room of an equal number whom he had ejected; SMITH and those appointed with him, "having," it is stated, "been examined and approved by the Assembly of Divines now sitting at Westminster." The same year he was made Hebrew Lecturer, and Censor Philosophicus, and in the following year, Greek Praelector. In order to retain his Fellowship he ought to have been ordained in 1646, being then a Master of Arts of two years' standing, but, for some unknown reason, he was allowed to postpone his ordination for four years beyond the usual period. It is probable, however, that he followed the custom of the times, and, though unordained, occasionally preached.

In 1650, he was appointed Dean of the College and Catechist. The lectures which he delivered in the discharge of the duties of these offices, form the larger part of the "Select Discourses." They were strictly "College Exercises," and bear every appearance of having been delivered to a learned audience.

The following year he was seized with an illness, probably brought on by over-application to study. In the Spring of 1652, having committed the care of his pupils, who were numerous, to his friend Patrick, he repaired to London for the benefit of his health; and continued there for some months under the care of Dr. Theodore Mahern.

Towards the end of July he returned to Cambridge, and evidently to die. All the means employed for his restoration proved unavailing. For nearly a week he lay in a state of unconsciousness. During one of his lucid intervals he gave directions as to the disposition of his property; but before he could put his hand to the document which his friends had drawn up, he sank from exhaustion, and passed away the seventh day of August, 1652, in the thirty-seventh year of his age. His library of over six hundred volumes, "many of them large and costly,"* he bequeathed to Queen's College, in the Chapel of which he was interred, though no inscription marks the exact spot where he was laid. Such was the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries, that as Patrick, who preached † on the occasion tells us, the Vice-Chancellor, all the Heads of Houses, and a very large congregation attended him to his grave.

II.

SMITH was accurately and widely read. Outside the Bible, his favourite authors were Plato, Cicero, Plotinus, Proclus, Plutarch, and Simplicius. Among the many and ethereal and often fantastical speculations of the Neo-Platonists, he seems to have moved with ease, selecting

* "Select Discourses," 518.

† The sermon is printed at the end of the "Select Discourses."

with a careful hand only those great and ever-living truths, which it was the mission of that school of writers to revive and spread in the then un-Christianized portions of the Graeco-Roman world. He was also skilled in Hebrew and Oriental lore, his "Discourse on Prophecy," exhibiting considerable acquaintance with the Rabbinical writers. His mathematical lectures are spoken of with praise. *

Besides an active, comprehensive, and well-stored mind, he had the gift of ready and clear utterance. In the society, and for the instruction of others, he delighted in its use. "He was not," says Patrick, "a library locked up, nor a book clasped, but stood open for any to converse withal that had a mind to learn. Yea, he was a fountain running over, labouring to do good to those who perhaps had no mind to receive it. None more free, and communicative than he was to such as desired to discourse with him; nor would he grudge to be taken off from his studies on such occasions. It may be truly said of him, that a man might always come better from him." †

Among his friends he seems to have inspired the most unbounded affection. The terms in which they speak of him are to our modern ears, to say the least, extremely rhetorical; they have all the appearance, however, of being perfectly sincere. In his "Address to the Reader,"

* "Select Discourses," p. xix.

† Ibid., 507.

Dr. Worthington describes him as "a faithful, hearty, and industrious servant of God," who, "counted it his duty and dignity, his meat and drink, to do the will of his Master in heaven," "both a righteous and truly honest man, and also a good man," "a follower and imitator of God, in purity and holiness, in benignity, goodness, and love," "a lover of our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," "a lover of his spirit and of his life," "a lover of his excellent laws and rules of holy life," "a serious practiser of his sermon in the mount: the best sermon that was ever preached, and yet none more generally neglected by those that call themselves Christians." "To be short," he continues, "he was a Christian more than a little, even wholly and altogether such: a Christian inwardly and in good earnest: religious he was, but without any vain-gloriousness and ostentation, not so much a talking or a disputing, as a living, a doing, and an obeying Christian: one inwardly acquainted with the simplicity and power of godliness, but no admirer of the Pharisaic and sanctimonious shows, though never so goodly and specious." Besides being "a truly godlike man," he tells us that he was eminent also "in those other perfections and accomplishments of the mind, which rendered him a very rational and learned man: and withal, in the midst of all these great accomplishments, as eminent and exemplary in unaffected humility and true lowliness of mind."

In a similar, and even more exalted strain, is the language used by Patrick. "Let us look first upon him,"

he says, "in his *eminency*, *dignity*, and *worth*. A very glorious star he was, and shone brighter in our eyes than any he ever looked upon, when he took his view of the heavenly bodies; and now he shines as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever, being wise, and having turned many, I believe, to righteousness." Of "the vastness of his learning," of "his very singular wisdom and great prudence," and of "his admirable skill and readiness in the managery of affairs," he speaks in terms of the loftiest praise. In the same way he describes his moral qualities, "his integrity, uprightness, and faithfulness," "his courtesy, gentleness, and sweetness," &c. "He had incorporated or insouled," he says, "all principles of justice and righteousness, and made them one with himself." "What," he exclaims, "shall I say of his love? none that knew him well, but might see in him love bubbling and springing up in his soul, and flowing out to all; and that love, unfeigned, without guile, hypocrisy, or dissimulation. I cannot tell you how his soul universalized, how tenderly he embraced all God's creatures in his arms, more especially men, and principally those in whom he beheld the image of his heavenly Father. He would ever have emptied his soul into theirs. Let any who were thoroughly acquainted with him, say if I lie."*

* Funeral Sermon.

Language like this is evidently the language of profound and deeply moved affection. There is in it without doubt a considerable amount of exaggeration. Even Dr. Worthington felt that to others it would seem so, and half apologises for it, saying, "If it should seem to have in it anything of hyperbolism and strangeness, it must seem so to such only as either were unacquainted with him, and strangers to his worth, or else find it a hard thing not to be envious, and a difficulty to be humble. Those that had a more inward converse with him, knew him," he continues "to be a person truly exemplary in the temper and constitution of his spirit, and in the well ordered course of his life, and eminent in those things that are worthy of praise and imitation."* But making all necessary abatements, there can be no doubt that SMITH was not only the object of a profound love and admiration on the part of those who knew him, but also a beautiful and noble character, high-souled, gentle, sympathetic, skilful in the management of affairs, apt to teach, affable, and chivalrous, easily moved by injustice, full of forgiveness and charity, and animated by a wise and loving zeal in the cause of Christianity: one in short, who, in the words of Worthington, "counted it his meat and drink to do the will of his Master in heaven, and that, too, from his very soul, and with good will." As for his learning, the largeness and comprehensiveness of

* "Select Discourses," p. xix.

his intellectual grasp, his clear insight, his overteeming wealth of imagination and thought, and the strong hold which he had of the true principles of the Christian faith —the witnesses of these are to hand in his "Select Discourses."

III.

At the time of his death, all SMITH'S papers were not, it would appear, in his own possession; those of them which were, were taken in charge by his executor, Dr. Samuel Cradock, and were afterwards, along with some others, "divers of which were loose and scattered, not being written by the author in any book,"* entrusted to Dr. Worthington for publication. The result of Worthington's editorial labours was a volume of "Select Discourses," published in 1660, with the promise of another which never appeared.†

The Discourses are in all ten. The first six are closely connected, and form part of a large scheme of thought, in which the author proposed "to treat of the main heads

* "Select Discourses," p. xiii.

† The dates of the other editions are 1673, 1821, 1859; besides these, an abridgement was published by Lord Hailes in 1754; and another by the Rev. Jno. King, M.A., of Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1820. The "Discourse on Prophecy" was translated into Latin by M. Le Clerc, and prefixed to his Commentary on the Prophets; and in 1745, the "Discourse on the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion" was published separately at Glasgow.

and principles of religion." The first is designed as a prolegomenon or preface to the rest, and treats of the "true method of knowing, which is not so much by notions as actions: as religion itself consists not so much in words as in things." In the second and third treatises, he deals with some reasons why men do not adopt this "true method," or with those "two anti-deities," as he calls them, Superstition and Atheism, "which may seem," he remarks, "to comprehend in them all kinds of apostasy and prevarication from religion." Each, he points out, has the same cause, viz:—a false knowledge of God: Superstition being the offspring of weak and timorous minds, and Atheism of minds sour and imperious. Having thus cleared the way, he enumerates the following as "the main heads and principles of religion." (1.) The Immortality of the Soul; (2.) The Existence and Nature of God; (3.) The Communication of God to Mankind through Christ. Of the first two, he treats somewhat elaborately in two successive discourses; on the discussions of the third, he did not live to enter. The discourse on prophecy, the last of the connected series, was intended as an introduction to it. Of prophecy, Worthington tells us "he intended to treat but a little, and then pass on to the third and last part, viz., those principles of revealed truth which tend most of all to advance and cherish true and real piety. But, in his discoursing on prophecy, so many considerable inquiries offered themselves to his thoughts, that, by the time he

had finished this discourse, his office of Dean and Catechist in the College did expire." "Thus," he continues, "he who designed to speak of God's communication of Himself to mankind through Christ, was taken up by God into a more inward and immediate participation of Himself in blessedness. Had he lived, and had health to have finished the remaining part of his designed method, the reader may easily conceive what a valuable piece that discourse would have been." *

To these six connected discourses, Worthington has added four others, "delivered by the author in some chapel exercises." These four supplementary discourses are "upon arguments of most practical concernment," and are of great value. Their selection shows considerable tact on the part of Worthington, and leaves the desire for more. Their titles are: "On Legal and Evangelical Righteousness," "On the Shortness of a Pharisaical Righteousness," "On the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion, "On a Christian's Conflicts with, and Conquests over Satan." All are intimately connected with, and more or less illustrative of the treatises forming the first part of the volume. Their style is somewhat simpler, and confirms what Worthington says respecting their author's mode of preaching, that, "when he preached in lesser country auditories, it was his desire and endeavour to accommodate his expressions to ordinary vulgar capaci-

* "Select Discourses," 294-5.

ties, being studious to be understood."* The finest of these four discourses, and probably the most valuable of all SMITH'S writings, is the one "On the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion." The last of them was preached at Huntingdon, "where one of Queen's College is every year, on March 25th, to preach a sermon against witchcraft, diabolical contracts, &c.," and is admirably analysed and commented on by Matthew Arnold in his "Last Essays on Church and Religion." †

One of the main obstacles to the popularity of SMITH'S writings is the frequent occurrence of classical and other quotations. By Dr. Worthington, many of these were translated. In the following extracts, and in the three discourses which are given in full, the original of the quotation has in most cases been left out, and, where requisite, a translation has been inserted. The effect of these quotations is often to mar the flow of the argument; frequently, however, they give a fulness and richness to the author's thought.

IV.

SMITH was not a philosopher,‡ and had no intention of philosophising. He was a teacher of religion, and in the

* Ibid., p. xxxii. † p. 23 and foll.

‡ Of course I use the word in its old sense of a searcher or hunter after truth. "Philosophy seeks truth, theology finds it, religion possesses it." Picus Mirandola.

interests of religion wrote and delivered his discourses. Whatever of philosophy there is in them is there as an accident, and is used not to buttress up the principles of religion, but as an off-set to bring out their true and essential character. Superstition and Atheism he regards as the "two chief anti-deities that are set up against, and seem to comprehend in them all kinds of apostasy and prevarication from religion*:" and as such he deals with them. On the other hand, he treats "of the nature of God and of our own immortal souls" for the simple reasons, that "both show us what our religion should be, and also the necessity of it;" while his reason for the intended discussion of the doctrine of "free grace in Christ," was because it is "the sweet and comfortable means of attaining to that perfection and blessedness which the other belief (in God and immortality) teaches us to aim at."† His three "fundamental articles of faith and practice" he regards as things given, and beyond dispute. His one concern is not to demonstrate their truth, but to clear them of superstitious vanities, and by setting them in the light of day, to win men to their side.

As his writings are so little known, it may not be out of place to note some of the chief points of his teaching.

1. The foundation of religion is a clear knowledge of its true principles. These are all in themselves plain and easy, delivered in the most familiar way, so that he that

* "Select Discourses," p. 25. † Ib., p. 62.

runs may read. So clear and perspicuous are they, that "they need no key of analytical demonstration to unlock them." Given in the Scriptures, they are given also in the human soul. There we have those "truths of natural inscription," those fundamental principles of truth "which reason by a naked intuition, may behold in God," or those necessary inferences or "deductions that may be drawn from them," God having "stamped a copy of His own archetypal loveliness upon the soul, that men, by reflecting into themselves, might behold there all those ideas of truth which concern the nature and essence of God, and, so, beget within themselves the most free and generous motions of love towards Him." "Reason in man," he says, "is a light flowing from the Fountain and Father of lights, a partial likeness of the Eternal Reason" communicated to man in order that he may "work out of himself all those notions of God which are the true groundwork of love and obedience, and conformity to Him." Besides these "truths of natural inscription," there is the action of the divine revelation, whereby God is continually discovering to men the way of return to Himself. And further, all those truths which are requisite for salvation, God is perpetually impressing on men's minds, on the one hand by throwing light upon the truths themselves, and on the other by strengthening the faculties of the mind, and giving us power to see and apprehend.*

* Vide pp. 86. 164-8.

2. False knowledge, or ignorance of these truths of religion, generates in some a "debasing and terrifying fear," and in others of a "more stout and surly nature," a spirit of hatred, "cankering them with malice against the Deity;" and thus, producing in the one case Superstition, and in the other Atheism.*

3. The true method of attaining to divine knowledge is in keeping the commandments of God. Actions, not notions, are our teachers. "They are not always the best skilled in divinity," he observes, "that are the most studied in those pandects, into which it is sometimes digested, or that have erected the greatest monopolies of art and science, . . . It is but a thin airy knowledge that is got by mere speculation, which is ushered in by syllogisms and demonstrations." Divinity is a divine life rather than a divine science. Hence, he says, our Lord "hangs all true acquaintance with it upon doing God's will: if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." We must not suppose, however, "that we have then attained to the right knowledge of truth, when we have broken through the outward shell of words and phrases that house it up; or when, by a logical analysis, we have found out the dependencies or coherences of them, one with another . . . There is a knowing of the truth as it is in Jesus, as it is

* Ibid. pp. 19. 25.

in a Christlike nature, as it is in that sweet, mild, humble, and loving spirit of Jesus, which spreads itself like a morning sun upon the souls of good men, full of light and life." To know it in this way, we must not only do, we must love the truth. "That is not the best and truest knowledge of God which is wrought out by the labour and sweat of the brain, but that which is kindled within us by a heavenly warmth in our hearts." And again, "that which enables us to know and understand aught in the things of God, must be a living principle of holiness within us. When the tree of knowledge is not planted by the tree of life, and sucks not up sap from thence, it may as well be fruitful with evil as with good, and bring forth bitter fruit as well as sweet. If we would indeed have our knowledge thrive and flourish, we must water the tender plants of it with holiness." On the other hand, requisite as love is for knowledge, practice is equally so. "The clearest and most distinct notions of truth that shine in the souls of the common sort of men, may be extremely clouded, if they be not accompanied with an answerable practice that might preserve their integrity." And so with all other sorts of men. The "tender plants" of our knowledge "may soon be spoiled by the continual droppings of our corrupt affections upon them; they are but of a weak and feminine nature, and so may sooner be deceived by that wily serpent of sensuality that harbours within us." The one

way to true knowledge is a loving faithful observance of the commandments of God.*

4. The reasons why men fail in religion are various. Many separate knowledge from practice, and fail, through conceit of their own opinions. "We have many grave and reverend idolaters," he remarks, "that worship truth only in the image of their own wits: that could never adore it so much as they may seem to do, were it anything else but such a form of belief as their own wandering speculations had at last met together in: were it not that they find their own image and superscription upon it." Most fail through indifference or thoughtlessness. "There are few things," he observes, "in which men are more lazy and sluggish than in matters of religion." In most, there are certain "common notions and natural instincts of devotion, which are ever and anon roving after religion; and as they casually and fortuitously start up any models and ideas of it, they are presently prone to believe themselves to have found out this only pearl of price; the religion of most men being indeed nothing else but such a strain and scheme of thoughts and actions, as their natural propensions, swayed by nothing else but an inbred belief of a Deity, accidentally run into." Of the mistakes they make, he enumerates in his discourse on the "Shortness and Vanity of a Pharisaical Religion," four, viz.: (1.) Substi-

* Ibid. pp. 1. 3. 7. 8. 11.

tuting obedience to a part of the law for obedience to the whole; (2.) Rendering a merely outward compliance to the divine law; (3.) Serving God in a purely servile spirit; (4.) Rendering an obedience which is merely mimetic or theatrical, and not the expression of their own mind and will. Generally speaking, the real cause of failure is, that, "we want not so much means of knowing what we ought to do, as wills to do that which we may know."*

5. Though we have not the will to do what we know we ought, it by no means follows that we have not the power. Weak, or weakened as our natural powers may be, we are under no necessity to sin; nor are they so weak that we cannot in any kind or manner of way seek after a true conformity to the will of God. The witness of this is within ourselves. For "if men would seriously commune with their hearts, their own consciences would tell them plainly, that they might avoid and omit more evil than they do, and that they might do more good than they do." And besides, "God has not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind." The gospel is nothing less than "a mighty efflux and emanation of life and spirit, freely issuing forth from an omnipotent source of grace and love, as that true godlike vital influence, whereby the Divinity derives itself into the souls of men,

* Ibid. pp. 6. 130, and foll.

enlivening and transforming them into its own likeness, and strongly imprinting upon them a copy of its own beauty and goodness." Hence it is, he remarks, that "St. Paul everywhere magnifies this dispensation of the free mercy and grace of God, as being the only sovereign remedy against all inward radicated maladies of sin and corruption, as that panacea or balsam of life which is the universal restorative of decayed and impotent natures."*

6. Christianity, therefore, considered in itself, is nothing less than "a participation in the divine nature,"—"a vigorous efflux of the first truth and primitive goodness upon the spirits of men." It was brought in, "not only to hold forth a new platform and model of religion," and, "not only to refine some notions of truth that might formerly seem discoloured and disfigured by a multitude of legal rites and ceremonies;" nor even for the sole purpose "of casting our opinions concerning the way of life and happiness into a new mould and shape, in a pedagogical kind of way." "It is not so much a system and body of saving divinity, as the spirit and vital influx of it spreading itself over all the powers of men's souls, and quickening them into a divine life," "a vital and quickening thing, able to beget in men a soul and form of divine goodness." Nor is it the mere sublimation of our own natural powers and principles, wrought out by the strength of our own fancies or endeavours: it

* Ibid. pp. 242-3, 89. 87.

is an efflux of life and power from God Himself, gratuitously dispensing itself to the minds of men, and producing life and virtue and energy wheresoever it comes.*

7. On the other hand, considered as a religion, Christianity is neither emotion, theory, nor ritual, but a life, or as Matthew Arnold puts it, "a temper, a behaviour." While resting upon knowledge, its main concern is with conduct. Ritual is "the garish dress and attire of religion," and consists of "those material crutches made up of carnal observances, upon which earthly minds are too apt to lean, and with which they would fain underprop their religion." At the same time there are duties and ordinances, certain rites and ceremonies, or religious performances which have been appointed by God, and which ought to be duly attended to. Their function, however, is not to usurp the place of religion, nor to divert our attention from the tempers of our minds, or from the qualities of our deeds. "They are intended," he says, "to help our dull minds to a more lively sense of the divine goodness." "We must not think," he adds, "that religion serves to paint our faces, to reform our looks, or only to inform our heads, or instruct and tune our tongues; no, nor only to tie our hands, and make our outward man more demure, and bring our bodies and bodily actions into a better decorum: but its main business is to purge and reform our hearts, and all the illicit actions and

* Ibid. pp. 162-3. 102. 89. 96. 156. 94.

motions thereof." So again, with respect to faith and emotion. "God," he remarks, "respects not a bold, confident, and audacious faith, that is big with nothing but its own presumptions. It is not because our brains swim with a strong conceit of God's eternal love to us, or because we grow big and swell into a mighty bulk, with airy fancies and presumptions of our acceptance with God, that makes us at all the more acceptable to Him; it is not all our strong dreams of being in favour with heaven that fills our hungry souls at all the more with it; it is not a pertinacious imagination of our names being enrolled in the book of life, or of the debt books of heaven being crossed, or of Christ being ours, while we find Him not living within us, or of the washing away of our sins in His blood, while the foul and filthy stains thereof are deeply sunk in our own souls; it is not, I say, a pertinacious imagination of any of these that can make us the better: and a mere conceit or opinion, as it makes us never the better in reality within ourselves, so it cannot render us more acceptable to God, who judges all things as they are. No, it must be a true compliance with the divine, which must render us such as the Divinity may take pleasure in. 'In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything,' nor any fancy built upon any other external privilege, 'but the keeping of the commandments of God.' No, but 'if any man does the will of God, him will both the Father and the Son love: they will come in to him and make their abode

with him.' This is the scope and mark at which a heaven-born faith aims; and when it hath attained this end, then is it indeed perfect and complete in its last accomplishment. And by how much the more ardency and intention faith levels at this mark of inward goodness and divine activity, by so much the more perfect and sincere it is." *

8. For the conduct of the Christian life, he lays down two principal rules, viz.: to follow the eternal and unchangeable rules of reason; and to deny one's self. It must be remembered, however, that with SMITH, reason is not merely the reasoning faculty, but, as he phrases it, "a light of light, a light flowing from the Fountain and Father of lights, a partial likeness of the Eternal Reason." On the other hand by self-denial, he means the repression of our lower self; and that which alone teaches and enables us to do this, he says, is Christianity, or as he usually prefers to call it, true religion. At times he sums up the whole "method and secret" of Christianity under the one term, self-denial. How much he means by it, however, he is careful to let us see in his discourse on "The Nobleness and Excellency of True Religion." "I mean not," he says, "that men should deny their own reason, as some would have it; for that were to deny a beam of Divine light, and so to deny God, instead of denying ourselves for Him. It is better resolved by some

* Ibid. 141-3. 107-8.

philosophers in this point, that, 'to follow reason is to follow God;' and again, 'to obey right reason is the same as to obey God.' But, by self-denial, I mean the soul's quitting all its own interest in itself, and an entire resignation of itself to Him, as to all points of service and duty . . . . desiring only to be great in God . . . and so to live, not as its own, but as His." And in order to mark the contrast, he adds, "this is more or less the genius of wicked men; they will be something in themselves, they wrap themselves up in their own being, move up and down in a sphere of self-love, live a life of professed independency of God, and maintain a *meum et tuum* between God and themselves. It is the character only of a good man to be able to deny and disown himself, and to make a full surrender of himself unto God; forgetting himself, and minding nothing but the will of his Creator; triumphing in nothing more than in his own nothingness, and in the allness of the Divinity. But indeed this, his being nothing, is the only way to be all things; this, his having nothing, the truest way of possession of all things."*

9. On the effects or fruits of Christianity, he has dwelt at considerable length in the discourse on the "Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion." Here they need only be enumerated. They are these: (1.) It enlarges all the faculties of the soul, and begets a true ingenuousness,

* Ibid. 172-4, 165, 173-5.

liberty, and amplitude, the most free and generous spirit in the minds of good men; (2.) It restores a man to a just power and dominion over himself; (3.) It directs and enables a man to aim at the glory of God and his own assimilation to His character; (4.) It brings serenity and composedness of mind, the truest contentment, the purest and most satisfying joy and pleasure; (5.) It begets assurance and confidence both towards God, and amidst the vicissitudes of life; (6.) It spiritualizes material things, and enables men to behold amid the things which are seen and temporal, those which are not seen and eternal; and lastly, it enables men to observe and wait upon the Divine Providence, to do God's will, and to acquiesce in it. Christianity, he further observes, is progressive, and continually carries the soul towards its term and end. which is perfect blessedness.

Such is SMITH's view of Christianity, as set forth in the "Select Discourse." It possesses the rare merit of being at once Scriptural, natural, and verifiable. On one or other of these grounds it ought to commend itself to all parties. Of its Scripturalness, there can, or ought to be, I think, no doubt. In the "Select Discourses," the words of Scripture are somewhat rarely quoted. After the fashion of his time, SMITH preferred to quote a passage from Plato, Plotinus, or from some other classical or ancient author; yet, no intelligent student of the Bible can read his writings, and especially those parts in which he is not dealing with some old philosophical doctrine,

without feeling that, beneath all he says, there is a strong under-current of Biblical thought. How thoroughly his mind was imbued with Scripture, and how profound an insight he had into its meaning, may be seen on the eighty-ninth and following pages of the present volume. The exposition there given of the difference between the Law and the Gospel, is probably as fine a piece of exegesis as there is in the language, and contains more solid instruction as to the essential and practical character of Christianity, than many of the volumes which have since been written either here or in Germany.

Passing now to the Theology of the "Select Discourses," I have to repeat the remark, that SMITH does not philosophise. His feet are always on the solid ground of experience. Regarding his three "cardinal principles" as things given, or as things known, his aim in dealing with them is simply to explain and confirm. The only place where he attempts an elaborate proof is in the third and two following chapters on the Immortality of the Soul; and these chapters, though not without merit, I am disposed to regard as the least valuable part of the "Select Discourses." When written, they were probably of considerable value; for the present, with the exception of a few isolated passages, they seem to have little. So implicitly does SMITH trust to our intuitive knowledge, that he does not even attempt a proof of so important a doctrine as that of the existence of God. When approaching

it, he says, "here we shall not so much demonstrate that He is, as *what* He is." *

Those who wish to see a fuller analysis of SMITH'S Theology, I must refer to the second volume of Principal Tulloch's admirable work; all I can do here is to give a rapid sketch of its main outlines.

1. His first position is that "divinity," or divine knowledge, "is a true efflux from the eternal light, which, like the sunbeams, does not only enlighten, but heat and enliven;" "and as the eye cannot behold the sun unless it be sun-like, and hath the form and resemblance of the sun drawn in it; so neither can the soul of man behold God unless it be God-like, hath God formed in it, and be made partaker of the divine nature." Hence, "the prolepsis and fundamental principle of divine science is a good life." Hence, also, "to seek our divinity merely in books and writings, is to seek the living among the dead." We must seek within. The chief natural way whereby we can climb up to the understanding of the Deity, and of divine things, is by the contemplation of our own souls. The clearest impressions of him are there; elsewhere we behold only his traces; here we see his face. †

2. Of the three "cardinal principles," SMITH deals with that of the Immortality of the Soul first. This he regards as the primary datum of religious belief. Once it is cleared of all ambiguity, the objections of Atheism are removed,

* "Select Discourses," 127. † See pp. 1-4, 47, 74-5, &c.

and we are in a position to understand the nature of God. As to the truth of the doctrine, he remarks, that it is in no absolute need of proof, but "might be assumed rather as a principle or postulatum, seeing the notion of it is apt naturally to insinuate itself into the belief of the most vulgar sort of men." For the appreciation of any arguments in favour of it, there must be an antecedent converse with our own souls, as their secrets can only be got from them by a direct converse with themselves. "All those discourses which have been written of the soul's heraldry will not blazon it so well to us as itself will do." And further, in order to prove the truth of the doctrine, the indestructibility of every true substance must be assumed as a direct corollary from the Epicurean doctrine, "from nothing, nothing can come, and into nothing, nothing can return." The grounds on which he rests the proof of the doctrine are mainly: (1.) The soul's incorporeity; (2.) Its spontaneity; (3.) Its power of forming abstract and necessary ideas; its "naked intuition of eternal truth, which is always the same, never rising or setting, but always standing still in its vertical, and filling the whole horizon of the soul with a mild and gentle light." That, however, he remarks, which breeds a true sense of the soul's immortality, is true and real goodness. This alone, it is, that "can make men both know and love, believe and delight themselves in their own immortality."*

* See p. 32 and foll.

3. In dealing with the next cardinal principle, the Existence and Nature of God, SMITH, as I have said, enters upon no formal arguments. His aim is to demonstrate not so much that God is, as *what* He is. According to his wont, he starts from the spiritual side of humanity, and adopting the language of Plotinus, says, "he who reflects upon himself, reflects upon his own original, and finds the clearest impression of some eternal nature and perfect being stamped upon his own soul." "God," he adds, "has so copied Himself into the whole life and energy of man's soul, as that the lovely characters of Divinity may be most easily seen and read of all men within themselves." The task he therefore sets himself is, "to inquire what that knowledge of a Deity is, which a due converse with our own naked understandings will lead us into." Starting with the assertion that, "there is nothing whereby our own souls are better known to us than by the properties and operations of reason, he proceeds to show what our converse with them teaches. (1.) Our reason and its operations suggest the idea of the Divine Unity and Omniscience; (2.) Our will and power the idea of an Eternal Power; (3.) Our affections the idea of an Almighty Love; (4.) This, again, "which signifies some perfect essence, as a mind, wisdom, understanding, omnipotency, goodness, and the like, shows us that God is Eternal and Omnipresent, "not because he fills either place or time, but rather because he wanteth neither;" and lastly, because there is freedom and liberty in our-

selves, there is the same in God. Again, the restless craving there is within ourselves for a chief good, and for perfect blessedness, points to the fact that there is one who is the Chief Good, and in whom happiness perfectly exists. "God," he says, "is not better defined to us by our understandings than by our wills and affections; He is not only the eternal reason, that Almighty mind and wisdom which our understandings converse with, but He is also that unstained beauty and supreme good after which our souls are perpetually aspiring; and whereso-ever we find true beauty, love, and goodness, we may say, here or there is God." *

4. From this conception of the Divine Nature, which is simply the idealization of the higher powers of the human soul, SMITH proceeds to draw various "deductions." The principal of them are, on the one hand, that the works of God are the true effluxes of his overteeming wealth of goodness and love, and that his true glory is in communicating Himself to His creatures; and on the other, that all true happiness consists in participating in His nature, and in our own characters being assimilated to His.†

5. The third cardinal principle, and the one which is distinctively Christian, viz.—the communication of God to mankind through Christ, SMITH, as we have seen, did not live to discuss. All he dealt with was prophecy or

* Ib. p. 47 and foll. † Ib. p. 60 and foll.

revelation. This he describes as "a free influx of the Divine Mind upon our mind and understandings." *

For clearness of insight, to say nothing of its learning, the Discourse on Prophecy will bear comparison with some, or any of the best of modern times. Scattered throughout it are many valuable passages, among which the most important to religion are those which bear on the interpretation of Scripture. How thoroughly Scriptural his treatment of his third fundamental principle of faith and practice would have been may be gathered from his discourses on Legal and Evangelical Righteousness, and on the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion. His leading principle is that "the Gospel is not a thing without us," but "an efflux and emanation of life and spirit, freely issuing forth from an Omnipotent source of grace and love, whereby the Divinity derives itself into the souls of men, enlivening and transforming them into ts own likeness, and strongly imprinting upon them a copy of its own beauty and goodness." †

The central point of SMITH'S teaching seems to have been the existence in God of an actual and real righteousness which is continually acting upon the minds of men. The hint has been thrown out that he prepared the way for the separation of theology and morality.* The suggestion, I venture to think, notwithstanding the high authority by which it has been made, is without

* Ib. p. 80. † Ib. p. 89.

foundation. In SMITH'S day the separation indicated had already begun, and was being rapidly consummated on the one hand by the Calvinistical divines, and on the other, by those of the Laudian school. Against the tendencies of each, the teaching of the Cambridge Platonists was a decided protest. The aim of SMITH and of all those with whom he associated was to keep theology and morality together, and to show that in their roots they are inseparable. And certainly, if there is one truth on which the "Select Discourses" insist more than on another, it is that without morality there can be no true religion, and that equally with religion, all true morality rests, as on its primary foundation, on a noble, well-grounded, and expansive idea of the being and character of God.

v.

In his own day SMITH'S influence was great. How he impressed his friends we have seen. The impression he produced among his pupils was not less salutary and profound. Instructing them not only with words, but also by the example of his own pure and unsullied life of Christian reasonableness, those of them who are said to have traced their progress in learning and piety to the instruction they received from him are numerous. Nor

* Maurice, Modern Philosophy, 349. (London, 1862.)

was his influence felt by pupils and friends alone. It seems to have been felt as well by most of the young and receptive minds that passed through Cambridge during the period he was teaching. An example is John Howe, the famous author of the "Redeemer's Tears." The "platonic tincture which so remarkably runs through his later writings" Calamy attributes to his intimacy with Cudworth and More. Professor Rogers remarks, "in all probability, he imbibed this 'tincture' in a far greater degree from the justly celebrated JOHN SMITH of Queen's College, who was, at that time,* in the height of his deserved reputation, and whom, in many points, Howe strongly resembled"—a statement of some importance both as indicating the measure of SMITH's influence, and as showing the esteem in which he is held by writers and theologians of the school to which Professor Rogers belongs.

VI.

As a writer, though not without faults, SMITH has many excellencies. His faults are for the most part those of his age. The style which was then in vogue,† Milton has characterised as "a paroxysm of citations,

* Life of Howe, p. 19. (London, 1863.)

† See on this an excellent chapter in Mr. Mullinger's "Cambridge in the XVII. Cent." (London, 1867.)

pampered metaphors, and aphorisming pedantry." Butler describes it as—

> A Babylonish dialect
> Which learned pedants much affect;
> . . . a party-coloured dress
> Of patch'd and piebald languages;
> . . English cut on Greek and Latin,
> Like fustian heretofore on satin.

In the matter of citations, excepting perhaps in his discourses on the Immortality of the Soul and on Prophecy, SMITH offends much less against modern taste than do many of his contemporaries. From "pampered metaphors and aphorisming pedantry," as well as from unusual words and phrases, he is singularly free. Of unusual words, the following are all, or nearly all that occur: *autaesthesy* for self-knowledge; *autarchy* for self-sufficiency; *ampliate* for enlarge; *conspicable* for visible; *displacency* for disposition; *epoptists* for seers;* *feculency* for foulness; *februations* for purifications; *idiotical* for unlearned; *mormos* for bugbears; *opacous* for opaque; *pacate* for peaceful; *plerophory* for assurance; *promulge* for promulgate; *radication* for root; *transpiration* for perspiration; *sensate* for apprehend; *vivacious* for living; *derive upon, into, &c.*, for communicate; *sincerely* for clearly. The two last are also used with their modern signification. Though

* The term used to denote those who were initiated into the highest grade of the Eleusinian mysteries.

constructed after the fashion of his age, on classical models, as compared with that of the rest of the Cambridge Platonists, SMITH'S style is certainly the best. Scattered throughout the "Select Discourses" there are many passages of great beauty, while from beginning to end there is, generally speaking, an ease and directness of expression, together with a breadth and richness and sustained elevation of thought which, in the theological writers of the period, is rarely found. "Powerful and massive in argument," says Principal Tulloch, speaking of the "Select Discourses," "they are everywhere informed by a divine insight which transcends argument. Calmly and closely reasoned, they are at the same time inspired. The breath of a higher, diviner reason animates them all. The force of a logic nearly as direct and penetrating as that of Chillingworth directs an imagination as opulent as Jeremy Taylor's. The result is a delightful mixture of Christian philosophy and poetry. Profound glimpses of spiritual truth everywhere open to the reader as he advances, charmed with the rich unfoldings of an exuberant intelligence, rejoicing in the amplitude of its powers, and the sweep and glory of its flight. The poetic richness of the style seldom or never, as with Taylor, overbalances the weight of thought. It is ornate and picturesque, without being florid or tawdry. It is living . . . . The rhetorical and rational, the imaginative and spiritual, are fused and blended in a common intellectual action, which enlightens while it penetrates, and touches with beauty

and colour the eminence of truth which it reveals."* Enthusiastic as this estimate is, few who are acquainted with the "Select Discourses" will be disposed to abate it in the least.

The regret is that SMITH'S writings have been, and still are, so little known. But for their heavy burden of Neo-Platonic and other quotations, I have often thought that they might have been, as from their intrinsic merits they deserve to be, among the most popular of our religious books. The portions now presented will serve, I trust, not only to revive a knowledge of the school of writers to which SMITH belonged, but also, "to propagate better thoughts," and to "set men on considering the Christian religion as a doctrine sent from God, both to elevate and sweeten human nature." †

* Rational Theology, ii. 137.

† Burnet in his account of Whichcote.

SELECTIONS.

Natural Truth of Christianity.

The True Method of attaining Divine Knowledge.

1.—Of Divinity.

WERE I to define divinity, I should rather call it a *divine life*, than a *divine science;* it being something rather to be understood by a spiritual sensation, than by any verbal description, as all things of sense and life are best known by sentient and vital faculties; as the Greek Philosopher hath well observed—every thing is best known by that which bears a just resemblance and analogy with it: and therefore the Scripture is wont to set forth a good life as the prolepsis and fundamental principle of divine science; "Wisdom hath builded her house, and hewn out her seven pillars;" but "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—the foundation of the whole fabric.

2.—Of Religion and Divinity.

THEY are not always the best skilled in divinity, that are the most studied in those pandects, into which it is sometimes digested, or that have erected the greatest monopolies of art and science. He that is most practical in

divine things, hath the purest and sincerest knowledge of them, and not he that is most dogmatical. Divinity indeed is a true efflux from the eternal light, which, like the sunbeams, does not only enlighten, but heat and enliven; and therefore our Saviour hath, in His beatitudes, connected purity of heart with the beatifical vision. And as the eye cannot behold the sun, unless it be sunlike, and hath the form and resemblance of the sun drawn in it; so neither can the soul of man behold God, unless it be Godlike, hath God formed in it, and be made partaker of the divine nature. And the apostle St. Paul, when he would lay open the right way of attaining to divine truth, saith, that "knowledge puffeth up," but it is "love that edifieth." The knowledge of divinity that appears in systems and models is but a poor wan light; but the powerful energy of divine knowledge displays itself in purified souls: here we shall find the true "land of truth."

3.—Of the Search for Divine Knowledge.

TO seek our divinity merely in books and writings, is to seek the living among the dead: we do but in vain seek God many times in these, where His truth too often is not so much enshrined as entombed:—no; *intra te quære Deum*, seek for God within thine own soul; He is best discerned as Plotinus phraseth it, by an intellectual touch of Him—we must "see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and our hands must handle the word of life," that I may express it in St. John's words. The

soul itself hath its sense, as well as the body: and therefore David, when he would teach us how to know what the divine goodness is, calls not for speculation but sensation: "Taste and see how good the Lord is." That is not the best and truest knowledge of God which is wrought out by the labour and sweat of the brain, but that which is kindled within us by a heavenly warmth in our hearts. As, in the natural body, it is the heart that sends up good blood and warm spirits into the head, whereby it is best enabled to perform its several functions; so that which enables us to know and understand aright in the things of God, must be a living principle of holiness within us.

4.—Of the Growth of Divine Knowledge.

IF we would indeed have our knowledge thrive and flourish, we must water the tender plants of it with holiness. When Zoroaster's scholars asked him what they should do to get winged souls, such as might soar aloft in the bright beams of divine truth, he bids them bathe themselves in the waters of life: they asking what they were, he tells them, the four cardinal virtues, which are the four rivers of paradise. It is but a thin, airy, knowledge that is got by mere speculation, which is ushered in by syllogisms and demonstrations; but that which springs forth from true goodness brings such a divine light into the soul, as is more clear and convincing than any demonstration. The reason why, notwithstanding

all our acute reasons and subtile disputes, truth prevails no more in the world, is, we so often disjoin truth and true goodness, which in themselves can never be disunited; they grow both from the same root, and live in one another. We may, like those in Plato's deep pit, with their faces bended downwards, converse with sounds and shadows, but not with the life and substance of truth, while our souls remain defiled with any vice or lusts. These are the black Lethe lake which drench the souls of men: he that wants true virtue, in heaven's logic, "is blind, and cannot see afar off."

5.—Of Man's Idea of God.

SUCH as men themselves are, such will God Himself seem to be. It is the maxim of most wicked men, that the Deity is some way or other like themselves; their souls do more than whisper it, though their lips speak it not; and though their tongues be silent, yet their lives cry it upon the house-tops, and in the public streets. That idea which men generally have of God is nothing else but the picture of their own complexion: that archetypal notion of Him which hath the supremacy in their minds, is none else but such a one as hath been shaped out according to some pattern of themselves; though they may so clothe and disguise this idol of their own, when they carry it about in a pompous procession to expose it to the view of the world, that it may seem very beautiful, and indeed anything else rather than what

it is. Most men (though it may be they themselves take no great notice of it) like that dissembling monk,—*aliter sentire in scholis, aliter in musæis*—are of a different judgment in the schools from what they are in the retirements of their private closets. There is a double head, as well as a double heart. Men's corrupt hearts will not suffer their notions and conceptions of divine things to be cast into that form, into which a higher reason, which may sometimes work within them, would put them.

6.—Of Barren Speculations.

WHAT are all our most sublime speculations of the Deity, that are not impregnated with true goodness, but insipid things that have no taste nor life in them, that do but swell, like empty froth, in the souls of men! They do not feed men's souls, but only puff them up, and fill them with pride, arrogance, contempt, and tyranny towards those that cannot well understand their subtile curiosities: as those philosophers that Cicero complains of in his times,—who made their knowledge only matter of ostentation, to venditate and set off themselves, but never caring to square and govern their lives by it. Such as these do but, spider-like, take a great deal of pains to spin a worthless web out of their own bowels, which will not keep them warm. These indeed are those silly souls that are "ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth." They may, with

Pharaoh's lean kine, eat up and devour all tongues and sciences, and yet, when they have done, still remain lean and ill-favoured as they were at first. Jejune and barren speculations may be hovering and fluttering up and down about divinity, but they cannot settle or fix themselves upon it: they unfold the plicatures of truth's garment, but they cannot behold the lovely face of it. There are hidden mysteries in divine truth, wrapt up one within another, which cannot be discerned but by divine "Epoptists."

7.—*Of Knowing and Doing.*

WE must not think we have then attained to the right knowledge of truth, when we have broken through the outward shell of words and phrases that house it up; or when, by a logical analysis, we have found out the dependencies and coherencies of them one with another; or when, like stout champions of it, having well guarded it with the invincible strength of our demonstration, we dare stand out in the face of the world, and challenge the field of all those that would pretend to be our rivals.

We have many grave and reverend idolaters that worship truth only in the image of their own wits; that could never adore it so much as they may seem to do, were it anything else but such a form of belief as their own wandering speculations had at last met together in; were it not that they find their own image and superscription upon it.

There is a knowing of "the truth as it is in Jesus"—as it is in a Christ-like nature, as it is in that sweet, mild, humble, and loving spirit of Jesus, which spreads itself, like a morning sun, upon the souls of good men, full of light and life. It profits little to know Christ Himself after the flesh; but He gives His Spirit to good men, that searcheth the deep things of God. There is an inward beauty, life, and loveliness in divine truth, which cannot be known but then when it is digested into life and practice.

8.—Of the Method and Aim of Our Lord's Teaching.

DIVINE truth is better understood as it unfolds itself in the purity of men's hearts and lives, than in all those subtile niceties into which curious wits may lay it forth. And therefore our Saviour, who is the great master of it, would not, while He was here on earth, draw it up into any system or body, nor would His disciples after Him; He would not lay it out to us in any canons or articles of belief, not being indeed so careful to stock and enrich the world with opinions and notions, as with true piety, and a God-like pattern of purity, as the best way to thrive in all spiritual understanding. His main scope was to promote a holy life, as the best and most compendious way to a right belief. He hangs all true acquaintance with divinity upon the doing God's will: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether

it be of God." This is that alone which will make us, as St. Peter tells us, "that we shall not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour."

9.—*Of an Ingenuous Freedom of Judgment.*

AS we should not, like rigid censurers, arraign and condemn the creeds of other men which we comply not with, before a full and mature understanding of them, ripened not only by the natural sagacity of our own reason, but by the benign influence of holy and mortified affection: so neither should we over hastily subscribe to the symbols and articles of other men. They are not always the best men that blot most paper: truth is not, I fear, so voluminous, nor swells into such a mighty bulk as our books do. Those minds are not always the most chaste that are most parturient with these learned discourses, which too often bear upon them a foul stain of their unlawful propagation. A bitter juice of corrupt affections may sometimes be strained into the ink of our greatest scholars; their doctrines may taste too sour of the cask they come through. We are not always happy in meeting with that wholesome food (as some are wont to call the doctrinal part of religion) which hath been dressed out by the cleanest hands. Some men have too bad hearts to have good heads: they cannot be good at theory who have been so bad at the practice, as we may justly fear too many of those, from whom we are apt to

take the articles of our belief, have been. Whilst we plead so much our right to the patrimony of our fathers, we may take too fast a possession of their errors, as well as of their sober opinions. There are *idola specûs*—innate prejudices, and deceitful hypotheses, that many times wander up and down in the minds of good men, that may fly out from them with their graver determinations. We can never be well assured what our traditional divinity is; nor can we securely enough addict ourselves to any sect of men. That which was the philosopher's motto, we may a little enlarge, and so fit it for an ingenuous pursuer after divine truth: "he that will find truth, must seek it with a free judgment, and a sanctified mind:" he that thus seeks shall find; he shall live in truth, and that shall live in him; it shall be like a stream of living waters issuing out of his own soul; he shall drink of the waters of his own cistern, and be satisfied; he shall every morning find this heavenly manna lying upon the top of his own soul, and be fed with it to eternal life; he will find satisfaction within, feeling himself in conjunction with truth, though all the world should dispute against him.

10.—Of the Natural Amity between Truth and Reason.

THERE are some radical principles of knowledge that are so deeply sunk in the souls of men, as that the impression cannot easily be obliterated, though it may be

darkened. Sensual baseness doth not so grossly sully and bemire the souls of all wicked men at first, as to make them, with Diagoras, deny the Deity, or, with Protagoras, doubt of, or, with Diodorus, to question the immortality of rational souls. Neither are the common principles of virtue so pulled up by the roots in all, as to make them so dubious in stating the bounds of virtue and vice as Epicurus was, though he could not but sometimes take notice of them. Neither is the retentive power of truth so weak and loose in all sceptics, as it was in him, who, being well scourged in the streets till the blood ran about him, questioned, when he came home, whether he had been beaten or not. Arrian hath well observed, that the common notions of God and virtue impressed upon the souls of men, are more clear and perspicuous than any else; and that if they have not more *certainty*, yet they have more *evidence*, and display themselves with less difficulty to our reflective faculty than any geometrical demonstrations: and these are both available to prescribe out ways of virtue to men's own souls, and to force an acknowledgment of truth from those that oppose, when they are well guided by a skilful hand. Truth needs not at any time fly from reason, there being an eternal amity between them. They are only some private dogmas, that may well be suspected as spurious and adulterate, that dare not abide the trial thereof. And this reason is not everywhere so extinguished, as that we may not, by that, enter into the

souls of men. What the magnetical virtue is in these earthly bodies, that reason is in men's minds, which, when it is put forth, draws them one to another. Besides, in wicked men there are sometimes distastes of vice, and flashes of love to virtue; which are the motions which spring from a true intellect, and the faint strugglings of a higher life within them, which they crucify again by their wicked sensuality. As truth doth not always act in good men, so neither doth sense always act in wicked men; they may sometimes have their *lucida intervalla*—their sober fits; and a divine spirit blowing and breathing upon them, may then blow up some live sparks of true understanding within them; though they may soon endeavour to quench them again, and to rake them up in the ashes of their own earthly thoughts.

11.—Of the Corruption of Knowledge.

THE clearest and most distinct notions of truth that shine in the souls of the common sort of men, may be extremely clouded, if they be not accompanied with that answerable practice that might preserve their integrity: these tender plants may soon be spoiled by the continual droppings of our corrupt affections upon them; they are but of a weak and feminine nature, and so may be sooner deceived by that wily serpent of sensuality that harbours within us.

12.—Of Beholding the Truth.

THE more deeply our souls dive into our bodies, the more will reason and sensuality run one into another, and make up a most dilute, unsavoury, and muddy kind of knowledge. We must therefore endeavour more and more to withdraw ourselves from these bodily things, to set our soul as free as may be from its miserable slavery to this base flesh: we must shut the eyes of sense, and open that brighter eye of our understandings, that other eye of the soul, (as the philosopher calls our intellectual faculty,) "which indeed all have, but few make use of." This is the way to see clearly; the light of the divine world will then begin to fall upon us, and those pure coruscations of immortal and everliving truth will shine into us, and in God's own light shall we behold Him. The fruit of this knowledge will be sweet to our taste, and pleasant to our palates, "sweeter than honey or the honeycomb." The priests of Mercury, as Plutarch tells us, in the eating of their holy things, were wont to cry out "sweet is truth." But how sweet and delicious that truth is, which holy and heaven-born souls feed upon in their mysterious converse with the Deity, who can tell but they that taste it? When reason once is raised, by the mighty force of the Divine Spirit, into a converse with God, it is turned into sense: that which before was only faith well built upon sure principles (for such our science may be), now becomes vision. We shall then converse with God, and fasten our minds upon Him with

such an intellectual calmness and serenity as will present us with a blissful, steady, and invariable sight of Him.

13.—Of the Four Kinds of Men and their Different Kinds of Knowledge.

THE first whereof is, "That complex and multifarious man that is made up of soul and body," as it were by a just equality and arithmetical proportion of parts and powers in each of them. The knowledge of these men I should call in Plutarch's phrase: "a knowledge wherein sense and reason are so twisted up together," that it cannot easily be unravelled, and laid out into its first principles. Their highest reason is—"complying with their senses"—and both conspire together in vulgar opinion. To these that motto* which the Stoics have made for them may very well agree, their life being steered by nothing else but opinion and imagination. Their higher notions of God and religion are so entangled with the birdlime of fleshly passions and mundane vanity, that they cannot rise up above the surface of this dark earth, or easily entertain any but earthly conceptions of heavenly things. Such souls as are here lodged, as Plato speaks, are "heavy behind," and are continually pressing down to this world's centre: and though, like the spider, they may appear sometime moving up and down aloft in the air, yet they do but sit in the loom, and move in tha

* βίος ὑπόλημψις.

web of their own gross fancies, which they fasten and pin to some earthly thing or other.

The second is the man that looks at himself as being what he is rather by his soul than by his body; that thinks not fit to view his own face in any other glass but that of reason and understanding; that reckons upon his soul as that which was made to rule, his body as that which was born to obey, and like a hand-maid perpetually to wait upon his higher and nobler part. And in such a one the *communes notitiæ*, or common principles of virtue and goodness, are more clear and steady. To such a one we may allow "more clear and distinct opinions," as being already "in a method or course of purgation," or, at least, fit to be initiated into the *mysteria minora*—"the lesser mysteries of religion." For though these innate notions of truth may be but poor, empty, and hungry things of themselves, before they be fed and filled with the practice of true virtue; yet they are capable of being impregnated, and exalted with the rules and precepts of it. And therefore the Stoics supposed that the doctrine of political and moral virtues was fit to be delivered to such as these; and though they may not be so well prepared for divine virtue, (which is of a higher emanation) yet they are not immature for human, as having the seeds of it already within themselves, which, being watered by answerable practice, may sprout up within them.

The third is he whose soul is already purged by this lower sort of virtue, and so is continually flying off from the body and bodily passion, and returning into himself. Such, in St. Peter's language, are those "who have escaped the pollutions which are in the world through lust." To these we may attribute a lower degree of science—their inward sense of virtue and moral goodness being far transcendent to all mere speculative opinions of it. But if this knowledge settle here, it may be quickly apt to corrupt. Many of our most refined moralists may be, in a worse sense than Plotinus means, "full with their own pregnancy;" their souls may have too much heave and swell with the sense of their own virtue and knowledge: there may be an ill ferment of self-love lying at the bottom, which may puff it up the more with pride, arrogance and self-conceit. These forces with which the divine bounty supplies us to keep a stronger guard against the evil spirit, may be abused by our own rebellious pride, enticing them from their allegiance to God, to strengthen itself in our souls, and fortify them against heaven: like that supercilious Stoic who, when he thought his mind well armed and appointed with wisdom and virtue, cried out, *Sapiens contendet cum ipso Jove de felicitate.* They may make an airy heaven of these, and wall it about with their own self-flattery, and then sit in it as gods, as Cosroes the Persian king was sometimes laughed at for enshrining himself in a temple of his own. And therefore, if this knowledge be

not attended with humility and a deep sense of self-penury and self-emptiness, we may easily fall short of that true knowledge of God, after which we seem to aspire. We may carry such an image and species of ourselves constantly before us, as will make us lose the clear sight of the Divinity, and be too apt to rest in a mere "logical life," (an expression of Simplicius) without any true participation of the divine life, if we do not (as many do, if not all, who rise no higher) relapse and slide back by vain-glory, popularity, or such like vices, into some mundane and external vanity or other.

The fourth is the true metaphysical and contemplative man, who running and shooting up above his own logical or self-rational life, pierceth into the highest life; such a one who, by universal love and holy affection, abstracting himself from himself, endeavours to attain the nearest union with the divine essence that may be, knitting his own centre, if he have any, unto the centre of divine being. To such a one the Platonists are wont to attribute "a true divine wisdom," powerfully displaying itself "in an intellectual life," as they phrase it. Such a knowledge, they say, is always pregnant with divine virtue, which ariseth out of a happy union of souls with God, and is nothing else but a living imitation of a god-like perfection drawn out by a strong fervent love of it. This divine knowledge as Plotinus speaks—makes us amorous of divine beauty, beautiful and lovely; and this divine love and purity reciprocally exalts divine know-

ledge; both of them growing up together, like that Eros and Anteros that Pausanias sometimes speaks of. Though, by the Platonists' leave, such a life and knowledge as this is, peculiarly belongs to the true and sober Christian, who lives in Him who is life itself, and is enlightened by Him who is the truth itself, and is made partaker of the divine unction, "and knoweth all things," as St. John speaks. This life is nothing else but God's own breath within him, and an *infant-Christ* (if I may use the expression) formed in his soul, who is in a sense "the shining forth of the Father's glory."

14.—Of the Character of our Present Knowledge.

WE must not mistake; this knowledge is but here in its infancy; there is a higher knowledge, or a higher degree of this knowledge, that doth not, that cannot, descend upon us in these earthly habitations. We cannot here see *in speculo lucido;** here we can see but in a glass, and that darkly too. Our own imaginative powers, which are perpetually attending the highest acts of our souls, will be breathing a gross dew upon the pure glass of our understandings, and so sully and besmear it, that we cannot see the image of the Divinity sincerely in it. But yet this knowledge, being a true, heavenly fire kindled from God's own altar, begets an undaunted

* Sine interventu potentiæ imaginatricis or "face to face."

courage in the souls of good men, and enables them to cast a holy scorn upon the poor, petty, trash of this life, in comparison with divine things, and to pity those poor, brutish Epicureans that have nothing but the mere husks of fleshly pleasure to feed themselves with. This sight of God makes pious souls breathe after that blessed time when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, when they shall no more behold the Divinity through the dark mediums that eclipse the blessed sight of it.

OF SUPERSTITION.

1.—Of the True Cause and Rise of Superstition.

THE true cause and rise of superstition is indeed nothing else but a false opinion of the Deity, that renders him dreadful and terrible, as being rigorous and imperious; that which represents him as austere and apt to be angry, but yet impotent, and easy to be appeased again by some flattering devotions, especially if performed with sanctimonious shows, and a solemn sadness of mind. And I wish that that picture of God which some Christians have drawn of Him, wherein sourness and arbitrariness appear so much, doth not too much resemble it. According to this sense Plutarch hath well defined it in this manner: "a strong passionate opinion, and such a supposition as is productive of a fear debasing and terrifying a man with the representation of the gods as grievous and hurtful to mankind."

Such men as these converse not with the goodness of God, and therefore they are apt to attribute their impotent passions and peevishness of spirit to Him. Or, it may be, because some secret advertisements of their consciences tell them how unlike they themselves are to God, and how they have provoked Him; they are apt to be as much displeased with Him as too troublesome to them, as they think He is displeased with them. They are apt to count this divine supremacy as but a piece of tyranny

that, by its sovereign will, makes too great encroachments upon their liberties, and that which will eat up all their right and property; and therefore are slavishly afraid of Him, "fearing heaven's monarchy as a severe and churlish tyranny, from which they cannot absolve themselves," as the same author speaks: and therefore he thus discloseth the private whisperings of their minds: "the broad gates of hell are opened, the rivers of fire and Stygian inundations run down as a swelling flood, there is thick darkness crowded together, dreadful and ghastly sights of ghosts screeching and howling, judges and tormentors, deep gulfs and abysses full of infinite miseries." Thus he. The prophet Isaiah gives us this epitome of their thoughts: "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who shall dwell with the devouring fire? who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Though I should not dislike these dreadful and astonishing thoughts of future torment, which I doubt even good men may have cause to press home upon their own spirits, while they find ingenuity less active, the more to restrain sin; yet I think it little commends God, and as little benefits us, to fetch all this horror and astonishment from the contemplations of a Deity, which should always be the most serene and lovely: our apprehensions of the Deity should be such as might ennoble our spirits, and not debase them. A right knowledge of God would beget a freedom and liberty of soul within us, and not servility, as Plutarch

hath well observed: our thoughts of a Deity should breed in us hopes of virtue, and not gender to a spirit of bondage.

But that we may pass on. Because this unnatural resemblance of God as an angry Deity in impure minds, should it blaze too furiously, like the basilisk, would kill with its looks; therefore these painters use their best arts a little to sweeten it, and render it less unpleasing. And those that fancy God to be most hasty and apt to be displeased, yet are ready also to imagine Him so impotently mutable, that His favour may be won again with their uncouth devotions; that He will be taken with their formal praises, and, being thirsty after glory and praise and solemn addresses, may, by their pompous furnishing out all these for Him, be won to a good liking of them. And therefore superstition will always abound in these things, whereby this deity of their own, made after the similitude of men, may be most gratified, slavishly crouching to it.

2.—*Of the Superstitious.*

UNHALLOWED minds, that have no inward foundations of true holiness to fix themselves upon, are easily shaken and tossed from all inward peace and tranquility: and as the thoughts of some supreme power above them seize upon them, so they are struck with the lightning thereof into inward affrightments, which are further increased by a vulgar observation of those strange,

stupendous, and terrifying effects in nature, whereof they can give no certain reason, as earthquakes, thunderings and lightnings, blazing comets, and other meteors of a like nature, which are apt to terrify those especially who are already unsettled and chased with an inward sense of guilt. And though, as the events in nature began sometimes to be found out better by a discovery of their immediate natural causes, so some particular pieces of superstitious customs were antiquated and grown out of date, (as is well observed concerning those charms and februations anciently in use upon the appearing of an eclipse, and some others) yet often affrights and horrors were not so easily abated, while they were unacquainted with the Deity, and with the other mysterious events in nature, which begot those furies and unlucky goblins in the weak minds of men. To all which we may add the frequent spectres and frightful apparitions of ghosts and mormos: all which extorted such a kind of worship from them as was most correspondent with such causes of it. And those rites and ceremonies which were begotten by superstition, were again the unhappy nurses of it; such as are well described by Plutarch: "Feasts, and sacrifices, as likewise observations of unlucky and fatal days, celebrated with eating of raw things, lacerations, fastings, and howlings, and many times filthy speeches in their sacred rites, and frantic behaviour."

3.—Of Superstition and the Subtle Workings thereof.

WERE I to define superstition more generally according to the ancient sense of it, I would call it "such an apprehension of God in the thoughts of men, as renders Him grievous and burdensome to them, and so destroys all free and cheerful converse with Him; begetting, in the stead thereof, a forced and jejune devotion, void of inward life and love." It is that which discovers itself pedantically in the worship of the Deity, in anything that makes up only the body or outward vesture of religion; though there it may make a mighty bluster: and because it comprehends not the true divine good that ariseth to the souls of men from an internal frame of religion, it is therefore apt to think that all its insipid devotions are as so many presents offered to the Deity, and gratifications for Him. How variously superstition can discover and manifest itself, we have intimated before: to which I shall only add this, that we are not so well rid of superstition, as some imagine, when they have expelled it out of their churches, expunged it out of their books and writings, or cast it out of their tongues, by making innovations in names; wherein they sometimes imitate those old Caunii that Herodotus speaks of, who, that they might banish all the foreign gods that had stolen in among them, took their procession through all their country, beating and

scourging the air as they went along*; no: for all this, superstition may enter into our chambers, and creep into our closets; it may twine about our secret devotions, and actuate our forms of belief and orthodox opinions, when it hath no place else to shroud itself, or hide its head in; we may think to flatter the Deity by these, and to bribe it with them, when we are grown weary of more pompous solemnities: nay, it may mix itself with a seeming faith in Christ; as I doubt it doth now in too many who, laying aside all sober and serious care of true piety, think it sufficient to offer up the active and passive righteousness of their Saviour, to a severe and rigid justice, to make expiation for those sins they can be willing to allow themselves in.

* Herod. i. 172.

ON ATHEISM.

1.—Of Superstition and Atheism.

"SUPERSTITION could be well content there were no God to trouble or disquiet it, and atheism thinks there is none."* And as superstition is engendered by a base opinion of the Deity as cruel and tyrannical, (though it be afterwards brooded and hatched by a slavish fear and abject thoughts) so also is atheism: and that sour and ghastly apprehension of God, when it meets with more stout and surly natures, is apt to enrage them, and cankering them with malice against the Deity they so little brook, provokes them to fight against it, and undermine the notion of it; as this plastic nature which intends to form living creatures, when it meets with stubborn and unruly matter, is fain to yield to it, and to produce that which answers not her own idea; whence the signatures and impressions of nature sometimes vary so much from that seal that nature would have stamped upon them. Atheism could never have so easily crept into the world, had not superstition made way, and opened a back-door for it: it could not so easily have banished the belief of a Deity, had not that first accused and condemned it as destructive to the peace of mankind; and therefore it hath always justified and defended

* Plutarch.

itself by superstition; as Plutarch hath well expressed it; "Superstition afforded the principle of generation to atheism, and afterwards furnished it with an apology, which, though it be neither true nor lovely, yet wants it not a specious pretence."

Atheism most commonly lurks *in confinio scientiæ et ignorantiæ:* when the minds of men begin to draw those gross, earthly vapours of sensual and material speculations by dark and cloudy disputes, they are then most in danger of being benighted in them. There is a natural sense of God that lodges in the minds of the lowest and dullest sort of vulgar men, which is always roving after Him, catching at Him, though it cannot lay any sure hold on Him; which works like a natural instinct antecedent to any mature knowledge, as being indeed the first principle of it: and if I were to speak precisely in the mode of the Stoics, I would rather call it a desire for God, than, with Plutarch, a perception of God. But when contentious disputes, and frothy reasonings, and contemplations informed by fleshly affections, conversant only about the outside of nature, begin to rise up in men's souls; they may then be in some danger of depressing all those inbred notions of a Deity, and of reasoning themselves out of their own sense, as the old sceptics did: and therefore it might perhaps be wished, that some men that have not religion, had more superstition to accompany them in their passage from ignorance to knowledge. Thus we

see how superstition strengthened the wicked hands of atheism; so far is a formal and ritual way of religion, proceeding from baseness and servility of mind, (though backed with never so much rigour and severity) from keeping it out. And I wish some of our opinions in religion in these days may not have the same evil influences as the notorious Gentile superstition of old had, as well for the begetting of atheism, as I doubt it is too manifest they have for other errors.

We should now leave this argument; only before we pass from it, we shall observe two things which Plutarch hath suggested to us. The first whereof is, that however unlovely a thing superstition be, yet it is more tolerable than atheism, which I shall repeat in his words: "We should endeavour to take off superstition from our minds, as a film from our eyes; but if that cannot be, we must not therefore pluck out our eyes, and blind the faith that generally we have of the Deity." Superstition may sometimes keep men from the outward acts of sin, and so their future punishment may have some abatement. Besides that atheism offers the greatest violence to men's souls that may be, pulling up the notions of a Deity, which have spread their roots quite through all the powers of men's souls.

The second is this; "that atheism itself is a most ignoble and uncomfortable thing," as Cicero hath largely discussed it, and especially Plutarch, in the treatise of his, written by way of confutation of Colotes the Epi-

curean, who wrote a book to prove that a man could not live quietly by following any other sects of philosophers besides his own; as if all true good were only conversant "about the belly, and all the pores and passages of the body," and the way to true happiness was "to make the whole man carnal," or else "swinelike to fatten the soul with the pleasures of the body," as Plutarch hath not more wittily, than judiciously, replied upon him.

2.—Of the Sure Support which there is in a True Belief of a Deity.

A TRUE belief of a Deity is a sure support to all serious minds; which, besides the future hopes it is pregnant with, entertains them here with tranquility and inward serenity. What the Stoic said in his cool and mature thoughts,—"it is not worth the while to live in a world empty of God and Providence," is the sense of all those that know what a Deity means. Indeed, it were the greatest unhappiness that might be, to have been born into such a world, where we should be perpetually liable to all those abuses which the savage lusts and passions of the world would put upon us. It is not possible for anything well to bear up the spirit of that man, that shall calmly meditate with himself on the true state and condition of this world, should that mind and wisdom be taken away from it, which governs every part of it, and overrules all those disorders that at any time begin to break forth in it. Were there not an omniscient skill to

temper, and fitly to rank in their due places all those quarrelsome and extravagant spirits that are in the world, it would soon prove an unhabitable place, and sink under the heavy weight of its own confusion; which was wittily signified in that fable of Phaëton, who, being admitted to drive the chariot of the sun but for one day, by his rude and unskilful guidance of it made it fall down, and burn the world. Remove God and Providence out of the world, and then we have nothing to depend upon but chance and fortune, the humours and passions of men; and he that could then live in it, had need be as blind as these lords would be, that he might not see his own misery always staring upon him; and had need be more senseless and stupid that he might not be affected with it. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." "O Lord, Father and God of my life, give me not a proud look; but turn away from thy servants a giant-like mind."

OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

1.—Of the Fundamental Principles of Religion.

HERE we are to take notice of those two cardinal points which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the necessary foundations of all religion, viz., "That God is, and That He is a rewarder of them that seek Him." To which we should add, *the immortality of the reasonable soul*, but that *that* may seem included in the former: and, indeed, we can neither believe any invisible reward of which he there speaks, without an anterior belief of the soul's immortality; neither can we entertain a serious belief of that, but the notions of *pœna* and *præmium* will naturally follow from it. We never met with any who were persuaded of the former, that ever doubted of the latter: and therefore the former two have been usually taken alone for the first principles of religion, and have been most insisted upon by the Platonists; and, indeed, we scarce ever find that any were deemed religious, that did not own these two fundamentals. For the Sadducees, the Jewish writers are wont commonly to reckon them among the Epicureans, because, though they held a God, yet they denied the immortality of men's souls, which the new Testament seems to include, if not especially to aim at, in imputing to them a denial of the resurrection; which

is therefore more fully explained in the Acts, where it is added that they held there was "neither angel nor spirit." But, if we will have the fundamental articles of Christian religion, we must add to the former, *The communication of God to mankind through Christ;* which last the Scripture treats of at large, so far as concerns our practice, with that plainness of simplicity, that I cannot but think, that whosoever shall, ingeniously and with humility of spirit addressing himself to God, converse therewith, will see the bright beams of divinity shining forth in it, and, it may be, find the text itself much plainer than all those glosses that have been put upon it; though perhaps it is not so clear in matters of speculation, as some magisterial men are apt to think it is.

Now for these three articles of faith and practice, I think if we duly consider the Scriptures, or the reason of the thing itself, we shall easily find all practical religion to be referred to them, and built upon them. *The nature of God and of our own immortal souls* both show us what our religion should be, and also the necessity of it; and the doctrine of *free grace in Christ*, the sweet and comfortable means of attaining to that perfection and blessedness, which the other belief teaches us to aim at.

2—Of three considerations respecting the Proof of the Soul's Immortality.

I.

THE *immortality of the soul doth not absolutely need any demonstration to clear it, but might be assumed rather as a principle or* postulatum, *seeing the notion of it is apt naturally to insinuate itself into the belief of the most vulgar sort of men.* Men's understandings commonly lead them as readily to believe that their souls are immortal, as that they have any existence at all. And, though they be not all so wise and logical, as to distinguish aright between their souls and their bodies, or tell what kind of thing that is which they commonly call their soul; yet they are strongly inclined to believe that some part of them shall survive another, and that that soul, which, it may be, they conceive by a gross phantasm, shall live when the other more visible part of them shall moulder into dust. And therefore all nations have consented in this belief, which hath almost been as vulgarly received as the belief of a Deity, as a diligent converse with history will assure us; it having been never so much questioned by the idiotical sort of men, as by some unskilful philosophers, who have had wit and fancy enough to raise doubts, like evil spirits, but not judgment enough to send them down again.

This *consensus gentium* Cicero thinks enough whereby

to conclude a law and maxim of nature; which though I should not universally grant, seeing sometimes error and superstition may strongly plead this argument; yet I think for those things that are the matter of our first belief, that notion may not be refused. For we cannot easily conceive how any prime notion, that hath no dependency on any other antecedent to it, should be generally entertained, did not the common dictate of nature or reason, acting alike in all men, move them to conspire together in the embracing of it, though they knew not one another's minds. The notion of the immortality of the soul is such a one as is generally owned by all those, that yet are not able to collect it by a long series and concatenation of sensible observations, and, by a logical dependence of one thing upon another, deduce it from sensible experiments—a thing that, it may be, was scarce ever done by the wisest philosophers; but is rather believed with a kind of repugnancy to sense, which shews all things to be mortal, and which would have been too apt to have deluded the ruder sort of men, did not a more powerful impression upon their souls forcibly urge them to believe their own immortality. Though, indeed, if the common notions of men were well examined, perhaps some common notion adherent to this of the immortality may be as generally received, which yet in itself is false; and that, by reason of a common prejudice by which the earthly and sensual part of man will equally influence all men, until they come to be well acquainted with their

own souls; as, namely, a notion of the soul's materiality, and, it may be, its traduction too, which seems to be as generally received by the vulgar sort as the former. But the reason of that is evident; for the souls of men exercising themselves first of all, as the Greek philosopher expresseth it, merely by a "progressive kind of motion" —spending themselves about bodily and material acts, and conversing only with sensible things; they are apt to acquire such deep stamps of material phantasms to themselves, that they cannot imagine their own being any other than material and divisible, though of a fine ethereal nature: which kind of conceit, though it may be inconsistent with an immortal and incorruptible nature, yet hath had too much prevalency in philosophers themselves, their minds not being sufficiently abstracted while they have contemplated the highest Being of all. But such common notions as these are, arising from the deceptions and hallucinations of sense, ought not to prejudice those which not sense, but some higher power, begets in all men.

II.

To a right conceiving of the force of any such arguments as may prove the soul's immortality, there must be an antecedent converse with our own souls. It is no hard matter to convince any one, by clear and evident principles, fetched from his own sense of himself, who hath ever well meditated on the powers and operations of his own soul that it is immaterial and immortal.

But those very arguments that to such will be demonstrative, to others will lose something of the strength of probability: for, indeed, it is not possible for us well to know what our souls are, but by their "circular and reflex motions," and converse with themselves, which only can steal from them their own secrets. All those discourses which have been written of the soul's heraldry, will not blazon it so well to us as itself will do. When we turn our own eyes in upon it, it will soon tell us its own royal pedigree and noble extraction, by those sacred hieroglyphics which it bears upon itself.

III.

No substantial and indivisible thing ever perisheth. And this Epicurus and all of his sect must needs grant, as indeed they do, and much more than it is lawful to plead for; and therefore they make this one of the first principles of their atheistical philosophy: nothing can come from nothing, and nothing can return to nothing. But we shall here be content with that sober thesis of Plato in his *Timæus*, who attributes the perpetuation of all substances to the benignity and liberality of the Creator, whom he therefore brings in thus speaking to the angels—those "young gods," as he calls them: "You are not of yourselves immortal, nor indissoluble; but would relapse and slide back from that being which I have given you, should I withdraw the influence of my own power from

you: but yet you shall hold your immortality by a patent of mere grace from myself."* But to return: Plato held that the whole world, howsoever it might meet with many periodical mutations, should remain eternally; which I think our Christian divinity doth no where deny: and so Plotinus frames this general axiom, "that no substance shall ever perish." And, indeed, if we collate all our own observations and experience, with such as the history of former times hath delivered to us, we shall not find that ever any substance was quite lost; but though this Proteus-like matter may perpetually change its shape, yet it will constantly appear under one form or another, what art soever we use to destroy it.

3.—Of the Soul.

THAT knowledge which the soul retains in itself of things past, and, in some sort, prevision of things to come, whereby many grow so sagacious in forseeing future events, that they know how to deliberate and dis-

* The passage from which the above is taken is thus translated by Jowett:—"Gods and sons of gods who are my works, and of whom I am the artificer and father, my creations are indissoluble, if so I will. All that is bound may be dissolved, but only an evil being would wish to dissolve that which is harmonious and happy. And although being created ye are not altogether immortal and indissoluble, ye shall certainly not be dissolved, nor be liable to the fate of death; having in my will a greater and mightier bond than those which bound you at the time of creation."—Plato, iii. 623, 4.

pose of present affairs, so as to be ready furnished and prepared for such emergencies as they see in a train and series of causes which sometimes work but contingently—I cannot think Epicurus himself could, in his cool thoughts, be so unreasonable as to persuade himself, that all the shuffling and cutting of atoms could produce such a divine piece of wisdom as this is. What matter can thus bind up past, present, and future time together? which while the soul of man doth, it seems to imitate God's eternity, as far as its own finite nature will permit it to strive after an imitation of it; and, grasping and gathering together a long series of duration into itself, makes an essay to free itself from the rigid laws of it, and to purchase to itself the freedom of a true eternity. And as, by its "chronical and successive operations," it unravels and unfolds the contexture of its own indefinite intellectual powers by degrees; so, by this memory and prevision, it recollects and twists them all up together again into itself. And though it seems to be continually sliding from itself in those several vicissitudes and changes which it runs through, in the constant variety of its own effluxes and emanations; yet is it always returning back again to its first original, by a swift remembrance of all those motions and multiplicity of operations, which have begot in it the first sense of this constant efflux. As if we should see a sunbeam perpetually flowing forth from the bright body of the sun, and yet ever returning back to it again; it never loseth any part of its being, because

it never forgets what itself was: and though it may number out never so vast a length of its duration, yet it never comes nearer to its old age, but carrieth a lively sense of its youth and infancy along with it, which it can at pleasure lay a fast hold on. Such a jewel as this is too precious to be found in a dunghill: mere matter could never thus stretch forth its feeble force, and spread itself over all its own former pre-existences. We may as well suppose this dull and heavy earth we tread upon to know how long it hath dwelt in this part of the universe it now dwells in, and what variety of creatures have in all past ages sprung forth from it, and all those occurrences and events which have, during all this time, happened upon it.

4.—Of the Soul's Separateness from the Body.

WE find frequently such motions within ourselves which first are, before we take notice of them, and which, by their own turbulency and impetuousness, force us to an advertency: as those fiery spirits, and that inflamed blood, which sometimes fly up into the head; or those gross and earthly fumes that disturb our brains; the stirring of many other humours which beget within us grief, melancholy, anger, or mirth, or other passions; which have their rise from such causes as we were not aware of, or to which we gave no consent to create this trouble to us. Besides, all those passions and perceptions which

are begotten within us by some external motions which derive themselves through our senses, and fiercely knocking at the door of our minds and understandings, force them sometimes from their deepest debates and musings of some other thing, to open to them, and give them an audience.

Now, as to such motions as these are, it being necessary for the preservation of our bodies that our souls should be acquainted with them, man's body was so contrived, and his soul so united to it, that they might have a speedy access to the soul. Indeed, some ancient philosophers thought that the soul, descending more deeply into the body, as they express it, first begat these corporeal motions unknown to itself by reason of its more deep immersion, which afterwards, by their impetuousness, excited its advertency. But, whatsoever truth there is in that assertion, we clearly find from the relation of our own souls themselves, that our soul disowns them, and acknowledgeth no such motions to have been so busy by her commission; neither knows what they are, from whence they arise, or whither they tend, until she hath duly examined them. But these corporeal motions, as they seem to arise from nothing else but merely from the *machina* of the body itself; so they could not at all be sensated but by the soul.

Neither, indeed, are all our own corporeal actions perceived by us, but only those that may serve to maintain a good correspondence and intelligence between the soul

and body, and so foment and cherish that sympathy between them, which is necessary for the subsistence and well-being of the whole man in this mundane state. And, therefore, there is very little of that which is commonly done in our body, which our souls are at all informed of. The constant circulation of the blood through all our veins and arteries; the common motions of our animal spirits in our nerves; the maceration of food within our stomachs, and the distribution of chyle and nourishment to every part that wants the relief of it; the constant flux and reflux of more sedate humours within us; the dissipations of our corporeal matter by insensible transpiration, and the accesses of new matter in the room of it; all this we are little acquainted with by any vital energy which ariseth from the union of soul and body: and therefore, when we would acquaint ourselves with the anatomy and vital functions of our own bodies, we are fain to use the same course and method that we would to find out the same things in any other kind of animal, as if our souls had as little to do with any of these in our own bodies, as they have in the bodies of any brute creature.

But, on the other side, we know as well, that many things that are done by us, are done at the dictate and by the commission of our own wills; and, therefore, all such actions as these are, we know how, without any great store of discoursive inquiry, to attribute to their own proper causes, as seeing the efflux and propagation of them.

We do not, by a naked speculation, know our bodies first to have need of nourishment, and then, by the edict of our wills, enjoin our spirits and humours to put themselves into a hungry and craving posture within us, by corroding the tunicles of the stomach; but we first find our own souls solicited by these motions, which yet we are able to gainsay, and to deny those petitions which they offer up to us. We know we commonly meditate and discourse of such arguments as we ourselves please: we mould designs, and draw up a plot of means answerable thereto, according as the free vote of our own souls determines; and use our own bodies many times, notwithstanding all the reluctance of their nature, only as our instruments to serve the will and pleasure of our souls. All which, as they evidently manifest a true distinction between the soul and the body, so they do as evidently prove the supremacy and dominion which the soul hath over the body.

But before we wholly desert this head, we may add some further strength to it, from the observation of that conflict which the reasons and understandings of men maintain against the sensitive appetite: and wheresoever the higher powers of reason in a man's soul prevail not, but are vanquished by the impetuousness of their sensual affections, through their own neglect of themselves; yet are they never so broken, but they may strengthen themselves again: and, where they subdue not men's inordinate passions and affections, yet even there will they con-

demn them for them. Whereas, were a man all of one piece, and made up of nothing else but matter, these corporeal motions could never check or control themselves; these material dimensions could not struggle with themselves, or, by their own strength, render themselves anything else than what they are. But this "self-potent life," as the Greeks call it, which is in the soul of man, acting upon itself, and drawing forth its own latent energy, finds itself able to tame the outward man, and bring under those rebellious motions that arise from the mere animal powers, and to tame and appease all those seditions and mutinies that it finds there. And if any can conceive all this to be nothing but a mere fighting of the mal-contented pieces of matter one against another, each striving for superiority and pre-eminence; I should not think it worth the while to teach such a one any higher learning, as looking upon him to be endued with no higher a soul than that which moves in beasts or plants.

5.—Of the Badges of an Eternal Nature.

THERE is a naked intuition of eternal truth which is always the same, which never rises nor sets, but always stands still in its vertical, and fills the whole horizon of the soul with a mild and gentle light. There are such calm and serene ideas of truth, as shine only in composed souls, and cannot be discerned by any troubled or unstable fancy, that necessarily prove "some per-

manent and stable essence" in the soul of man, which (as Simplicius on Epictetus well observes) ariseth only "from some immovable and unchangeable cause which is always the same." For these operations about truth we now speak of, are not any "chronical energies,"—as he further expresses it; but the true badges of an eternal nature, and speak a sameness and a permanency (as Plato is wont to phrase it) in man's soul. Such are the archetypal ideas of justice, wisdom, goodness, truth, eternity, omnipotency, and all those either moral, physical, or metaphysical notions, which are either the first principles of science, or the ultimate complement and final perfection of it. These we always find to be the same, and know that no exorcisms of material mutations have any power over them: though we ourselves are but of yesterday, and mutable every moment, yet these are eternal, and depend not upon any mundane vicissitudes; neither could we ever gather them from our observation of any material thing, where they were never sown.

6.—*Of the True Sense of the Soul's Immortality.*

OUR highest speculations of the soul may beget a sufficient conviction thereof within us, but yet it is only true goodness and virtue in the souls of men, that can make them both know and love, believe and delight themselves in their own immortality. Though every good man is not so logically subtile as to be able, by fit mediums, to

demonstrate his own immortality, yet he sees it in a higher light. His soul, being purged and enlightened by true sanctity, is more capable of those divine irradiations, whereby it feels itself in conjunction with God, and by the light of divine goodness mixing itself with the light of its own reason, sees more clearly, not only that it may, if it please the supreme Deity, of its own nature exist eternally, but also that it shall do so: it knows it shall never be deserted of that free goodness that always embraceth it; it knows that Almighty love which it lives by, to be stronger than death, and more powerful than the grave; it will not suffer those holy ones that are partakers of it to lie in hell, or their souls to see corruption; and, though worms may devour their flesh, and putrefaction enter into those bones that fence it, yet it knows that its Redeemer lives, and that it shall at last see Him with a pure intellectual eye, which will then be clear and bright, when all that earthly dust, which converse with this mortal body filled it with, shall be removed; it knows that God will never forsake His own life which He hath quickened in it; He will never deny those ardent desires of a blissful fruition of Himself, which the lively sense of His own goodness hath excited within it: those breathings and gaspings after an eternal participation of Him are but the energy of His own breath within us: if He had had any mind to destroy it, He would never have shewn it such things as He hath done; He would not raise it up to such mounts of vision, to shew it all the glory of that

heavenly Canaan, flowing with eternal and unbounded pleasures, and then precipitate it again into that deep and darkest abyss of death and non-entity. Divine goodness cannot—it will not—be so cruel to holy souls that are such ambitious suitors for His love.* The more they contemplate the blissful effluxes of His divine love upon themselves, the more they find themselves strengthened with an undaunted confidence in Him; and look not upon themselves in these poor bodily relations and dependencies, but in their eternal alliances, as the sons of God, who is the Father of souls, souls that are able to live anywhere in this spacious universe, and better out of this dark and lonesome cell of bodily matter, which is always checking and clogging them in their noble motions, than in it: as knowing that, when they leave this body, they shall then be received into everlasting habitations, and converse freely and familiarly with that Source of Life and Spirit which they conversed with in this life in a poor, disturbed, and straitened manner. It is, indeed, nothing else that makes men question the immortality of their souls, so much as their own base and earthly loves, which first makes them *wish* their souls were not immortal, and then to *think* they are not.

* The same thought is thus expressed by *Henry More:*

"But souls that of His own good life partake,
He lives as His own self; dear as His eye
They are to Him: He'll never them forsake:
When they shall die, then God Himself shall die;
They live, they live in blest eternity."

ON THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF GOD.*

1.—Of the Fear of Death.

THERE is nothing that so debases and enthrals the souls of men, as the dismal and dreadful thoughts of their own mortality, which will not suffer them to look beyond this short span of time, to see an hour's length before them, or to look higher than these material heavens; which though they could be stretched forth to infinity, yet would the space be too narrow for an enlightened mind, that will not be confined within the compass of corporeal dimensions. These black opinions of death and the nonentity of souls—darker than hell itself—shrink up the free-born spirit which is within us, which would otherwise be dilating and spreading itself boundlessly beyond all finite being: and when these sorry, pinching, mists are once blown away, it finds this narrow sphere of being give way before it; and, having once seen beyond time and matter, it finds then no more ends or bounds to stop its swift and

* To this treatise the following remarkable passage from *Agapetus* is prefixed as a motto; "He who knows himself will know God; and he who knows God will be made like to God; and he will be made like to God who has become worthy of God; and he becomes worthy of God, who does nothing unworthy of God, but thinks the things which are His, and speaks what he thinks, and does what he speaks." *De Off. Reg.*, 3.

restless motion. It may then fly upwards from one heaven to another, till it be beyond all orb of finite being, swallowed up in the boundless abyss of divinity, beyond all that which darker thoughts are wont to represent under the idea of essence. This is that "divine darkness" of which the Areopagite speaks, into which the higher our minds soar, the more incomprehensible they find it. Those dismal apprehensions which pinion the souls of men to mortality, churlishly check and starve that noble life thereof, which would always be rising upwards, and spread itself in a free heaven: and when once the soul hath shaken off these, when it is once able to look through a grave, and see beyond death, it finds a vast immensity of being opening itself more and more before it, and the ineffable light and beauty thereof shining more and more into it; when it can rest and bear up itself upon an immaterial centre of immortality within, it will then find itself able to bear itself away, by a self-reflection, into the contemplation of an eternal Deity.

2.—Of the Being and Character of God.

BOTH these we may best learn from a reflection upon our own souls, as Plotinus hath well taught us: "He who reflects upon himself, reflects upon his own original," and finds the clearest impression of some eternal nature and perfect being stamped upon his own soul. And, therefore, Plato seems sometimes to reprove

the ruder sort of men in his times for their contrivance of pictures and images to put themselves in mind of the gods or angelical beings, and exhorts them to look into their own souls, which are the fairest images, not only of the lower divine natures, but of the Deity itself; God having so copied forth Himself into the whole life and energy of man's soul, as that the lovely characters of Divinity may be most easily seen and read of all men within themselves: as they say Phidias, the famous statuary, after he had made the statue of Minerva with the greatest exquisiteness of art, to be set up in the Acropolis at Athens, afterwards impressed his own image so deeply in her buckler, "that no one could delete or efface it without destroying the whole statue." And if we would know what the *impress* of soul is, it is nothing but God Himself, who could not write His own name so as that it might be read, except in rational natures. Neither could He make such, without imparting such an imitation of His own eternal understanding to them, as might be a perpetual memorial of Himself within them. And whenever we look upon our own soul in a right manner, we shall find a Urim and Thummim there, by which we may ask counsel of God Himself, who will have this always borne upon its breastplate. For though God hath copied forth His own perfections in this conspicable and sensible world, according as it is capable of entertaining them; yet the most clear and distinct copy of Himself could be imparted to none else but to intelligible and in-

conspicable natures: and though the whole fabric of this visible universe be whispering out the notions of a Deity, and always inculates this lesson to the contemplators of it—"God hath made me"—as Plotinus expresseth it; yet we cannot understand it without some interpreter within. "The heavens," indeed, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork," and "that which may be known of God"—even "His eternal power and Godhead," as St. Paul tells us, is to be seen in these external appearances: yet it must be something within that must instruct us in all these mysteries, and we shall then best understand them, when we compare that copy which we find of them within ourselves, with that which we see without us. The schoolmen have well compared sensible and intelligible beings in reference to the Deity, when they tell us that the one do only represent the footprints of God, the other the face of God.

3.—Of what our own Minds teach us respecting God.

IF we rightly reflect upon our own minds, and the method of their energies, we shall find them to be so framed, as not to admit of any other than one infinite source of all that reason and understanding which themselves partake of, in which they live, move, and have their being. And, therefore, in the old metaphysical theology, an original and uncreated μόνας, or unity, is made the fountain of all particulars and numbers, which have their existence from the efflux of its Almighty power.

And that is the next thing in which our own understandings will instruct us concerning God, viz.: His Eternal Power. For as we find a will and power within ourselves to execute the results of our own reason and judgment, so far as we are not hindered by some more potent cause: so, indeed, we know it must be a mighty, inward, strength and force that must enable our understandings to perform their proper functions, and that life, energy, and activity can never be separated from a power of understanding. The purest mind must also needs be the most Almighty Life and Spirit; and as it comprehends all things, and sums them up together in its infinite knowledge, so it must also comprehend them all in its own life and power. Besides, when we review our own immortal souls, and their dependency upon some Almighty mind, we know that we neither did, nor could, produce ourselves; and withal know that all that power which lies within the compass of ourselves, will serve for no other purpose than to apply several pre-existent things one to another, from whence all generations and mutations arise, which are nothing else but the events of different applications and complications of bodies that were existent before: and, therefore, that which produced that substantial life and mind by which we know ourselves, must be something much more mighty than we are, and can be no less indeed than Omnipotent, and must also be the first Architect and Demiourgos of all other beings, and the perpetual Supporter of them.

We may also know from the same principles, that an Almighty Love, every way commensurate with that most perfect being, eternally rests in it, which is as strong as that is infinite, and as full of life and vigour as that is of perfection. And because it finds no beauty nor loveliness, but in that and the issues thereof, therefore it never does nor can fasten upon any thing else. And, therefore, the divinity always enjoys itself and its own infinite perfections, seeing it is that eternal and stable sun of goodness that neither rises nor sets; is neither eclipsed, nor can receive any increase of light and beauty. Hence the Divine Love is never attended with those turbulent passions, perturbations, or wrestlings within itself, of fear, desire, grief, anger, or any such like, whereby *our* love is wont to explicate and unfold its affection towards its object. But as the Divine Love is perpetually most infinitely ardent and potent, so it is always calm and serene, unchangeable, having no such ebbings and flowings, no such diversity of stations and retrogradations as that love hath in us, which ariseth from the weakness of our understandings, that do not present things to us always in the same orient lustre and beauty: neither we nor any other mundane thing—all which are in a perpetual flux—are always the same. Besides, though our love may sometimes transport us, and violently rend us from ourselves and from all self-enjoyment, yet the more forcible it is, by so much the more it will be apt to torment us, while it cannot centre itself in that

which it so strongly endeavours to attract to it; and when it possesseth most, yet is it always hungry and craving, as Plotinus hath well expressed it—"it may always be filling itself, but, like a leaking vessel, it will be always emptying itself again." Whereas the infinite ardour of the Divine Love, arising from the unbounded perfection of the Divine Being, always rests satisfied within itself, and is wrapt up, and rests, in the same central unity in which it first begins. And, therefore, I think some men of later times have much mistaken the nature of the Divine Love, in imagining that love is to be attributed to God, as all other passions are, rather *secundum effectum* than *affectum:* whereas St. John, who was well acquainted with this noble spirit of love, when he defined God by it, and calls Him LOVE, meant not to signify a bare nothing known by some effects, but that which was infinitely such as it seems to be. And we might well spare our labour, when we so industriously endeavour to find something in God that might produce the effects of some other passions in us, which look rather like the children of hell and darkness than the lovely offspring of heaven.

When we reflect upon all this, which signifies some perfect essence, as a mind, wisdom, understanding, omnipotency, goodness, and the like, we can find no such thing as time or place, or any corporeal or finite properties which arise indeed, not from fulness, but from want of being we may also know God to be eternal and omni-

present, not because He fills either place or time, but rather because He wanteth neither. That which first begets the notion of time in us, is nothing else but that succession and multiplicity which we find in our own thoughts, which move from one thing to another, as the sun in the firmament is said to walk from one planetary house to another, and to have his several stages to pass by. And, therefore, where there is no such vicissitude or variety, as there can be no *sense of time*, so there can be nothing of the *thing*. Proclus hath wittily observed that Saturn, or (as the Greeks call him) Kronos, was the first of the mundane gods, "because time is necessarily presupposed to all generation," which proceeds by certain motions and intervals. This world is indeed a great horologe to itself, and is continually numbering out its own age; but it cannot lay any sure hold upon its own past revolutions, nor can it gather up its infancy and old age, and couple them up together. Whereas, an infinitely comprehensive mind hath a simultaneous possession of its own never-flitting life; and because it finds no succession in its own immutable understanding, therefore it cannot find any thing to measure out its own duration. And as time lies in the basis of all finite life, whereby it is enabled, by degrees, to display all the virtue of its own essence—which it cannot do at once; so such an eternity lies at the foundation of the divinity, whereby it becomes one "without any shadow of turning," as St. James speaks—without any variety or multiplicity within itself,

of which all created beings that are carried down in the current of time partake.

Now thus as we conceive of God's Eternity we may, in a correspondent manner, apprehend His Omnipresence; "not so much by an infinite expanse or extension of essence, as by an unlimited power," as Plotinus hath fitly expressed it. For as nothing can ever stray out of the bounds, or get out of the reach, of an Almighty mind and power; so when we barely think of mind or power, or any thing else most peculiar to the Divine essence, we cannot find any of the properties of quantity mixing themselves with it: and as we cannot confine it in regard thereof to any one point of the universe, so neither can we well conceive it extended through the whole, or excluded from any part of it. It is always some material being that contends for space: bodily parts will not lodge together, and the more bulky they are, the more they justle for room one with another; as Plotinus tells us; "bodily beings are great only in bulk, but divine essences in virtue and power."

We may, in the next place, consider that freedom and liberty which we find in our own souls, which is founded in our reason and understanding; and this is therefore infinite in God, because there is nothing that can bound the first mind, or disobey an Almighty power. We must not conceive God to be the freest agent, because He can do and prescribe what He pleaseth, and so set up an absolute will which shall make both law and reason,

as some imagine. For as God cannot know Himself to be any other than what indeed He is; so neither can He will himself to be any thing else than what He is, or that any thing else should swerve from those laws which His own eternal nature and understanding prescribe to it. For this were to make God free to dethrone Himself, and set up a liberty within Him, that should contend with the royal prerogative of His own boundless wisdom.

To be short. When we converse with our own souls, we find the spring of all liberty to be nothing else but reason; and therefore no unreasonable creature can partake of it: and that it is not so much any indifferency in our wills of determining without reason, much less against it, as the liberal election of, and complacency in, that which our understandings propound to us as most expedient: and our liberty most appears, when our will most of all congratulates the results of our own judgments; and then shows itself most vigorous, when either the particularity of that good, with which the understanding converseth, or the weak knowledge that it hath of it, restrains it not. Then is it most pregnant, and flows forth in the fullest stream, when its object is most full, and the acquaintance with it most ample; all liberty in the soul being a kind of liberality in the bestowing of our affections, and the want or scarce measure of it, parsimoniousness. And, therefore, the more the results of our judgments tend to an indifferency, the more we find our wills dubious, and in suspense what to choose; contrary

inclinations arising and falling within interchangeably, as the scales of a balance equally laden with weights; and all this while the soul's liberty is nothing else but a fluctuation between uncertainties, and languisheth away in the impotency of our understandings. Whereas the Divine understanding, beholding all things most clearly, must needs beget the greatest freedom that may be; which freedom as it is bred in it, so it never moves without the compass of it. And though the Divine will be not determined always to this or that particular, yet it is never bereft of eternal light and truth to act by: and, therefore, though we cannot see a reason for all God's actions, yet we may know they were neither done against it, nor without it.

4.—Of the Quest of the Chief Good.

WE always find a restless appetite within ourselves which craves for some supreme and chief good, and will not be satisfied with any thing less than infinity itself; as if our own penury and indigency were commensurate with the Divine fulness: and, therefore, no question has been more canvassed by all philosophy than this question of the Chief Good of man; and all the sects thereof were anciently distinguished by those opinions that they entertained "concerning the ends of Good and Evil," as Cicero phraseth it. But of how weak and

dilute a nature soever some of them may have conceived that Chief Good, yet they could not so satisfy their own inflamed thirst after it.

We find, by experience, that our souls cannot live upon that thin and spare diet with which they are entertained at their own home; neither can they be satiated with those jejune and insipid morsels with which this outward world furnisheth their table. I cannot think the most voluptuous Epicurean could ever satisfy the cravings of his soul with corporeal pleasure, though he might endeavour to persuade himself there was no better: nor the most quintessential Stoics find "a self-sufficiency and tranquillity" within their own souls, arising out of the pregnancy of their own mind and reason; though their sullen thoughts would not suffer them to be beholden to a higher being for their happiness.

The more we endeavour to extract an *autarchy* (or self-sufficiency), out of our own souls, the more we torment them, and force them to feel and sensate their own pinching poverty. Ever since our minds became so dim-sighted as not to pierce into that original and primitive blessedness which is above, our wills are too big for our understandings, and will believe their beloved prey is to be found where reason discovers it not: they will pursue it through all the vast wilderness of this world, and force our understandings to follow the chase with them: nor may we think to tame this violent appetite, or allay the heat of it, except we can look upward

to some Eternal and Almighty goodness which is alone able to master it.

It is not the nimbleness and agility of our own reason which stirs up these eager affections within us, (for then the most ignorant sort of men would never feel the sting thereof) but indeed some more potent nature which hath planted a restless motion within us that might more forcibly carry us out to itself; and, therefore, it will never suffer itself to be controlled by any of our thin speculations, or satisfied with those airy delights that our fancies may offer to it: it doth not, it cannot, rest itself anywhere but upon the centre of some Almighty good, some solid and substantial happiness; like the hungry child that will not be stilled by all the mother's music, or change its sour and angry looks for her smiling countenance: nothing will satisfy it but the full breasts.

The whole work of this world is nothing but a perpetual contention for true happiness, and men are scattered up and down the world, moving to and fro therein, to seek it. Our souls, by a natural science, as it were, feeling their own original, are perpetually travailing with new designs and contrivances, whereby they may purchase the scope of their high ambitions. Happiness is that pearl of price which all adventure for, though few find it. It is not gold or silver that the earthlings of this world seek after, but some satisfying good which they think is there treasured up. Neither is it a little empty breath

that ambition and popularity soars after, but some kind of happiness that it thinks to catch and suck in with it.

And thus, indeed, when men most of all fly from God, they still seek after him. Wicked men pursue, indeed, after a deity in their worldly lusts; wherein yet they most blaspheme; for God is not a mere empty name or title, but that self-sufficient good which brings along with it that rest and peace which they so much seek after, though they do most prodigiously conjoin it with something which it is not, nor can be, and in a true and real strain of blasphemy, attribute all that which God is, to something else which is most unlike Him, and, as St. Paul speaks of those infatuated Gentiles, "turn the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible man, of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

God is not better defined to us by our understandings than by our wills and affections; He is not only the eternal reason, that Almighty mind and wisdom which our understandings converse with; but He is also that unstained beauty and supreme good to which our wills are perpetually aspiring: and wheresoever we find true beauty, love, and goodness, we may say, here or there is God. And as we cannot understand any thing of an intelligible nature, but by some primitive idea we have of God, whereby we are able to guess at the elevation of its being, and the pitch of its perfection; so neither do our wills embrace any thing without some latent sense of Him, whereby they can taste and discern how near any thing

comes to that self-sufficient good they seek after: and, indeed, without such an internal sensating faculty as this is, we should never know when our souls are in conjunction with the Deity, or be able to relish the ineffable sweetness of true happiness. Though here below we know but little what this is, because we are little acquainted with fruition and enjoyment: we know well what belongs to longing and languishing, but we know not so well what belongs to plenty and fulness: we are well acquainted with the griefs and sicknesses of this inbred love, but we know not what its health and complacencies are.

5.—Of the Creation of the World.

ALL Divine productions or operations that terminate in something without Him, are nothing else but the free effluxes of His own Omnipotent love and goodness, which always moves along with them, and never willingly departs from them. When God made the world, it was not out of a piece of self-interest, as if He had had any design to advance Himself, or to enlarge His own stock of glory and happiness; for what beauty or perfection can be in this whole creation, which was not before contained in Himself as the free fountain of all? or what could He see out of Himself that could add any thing to His own stature, which He found not already in Himself? "He made not the world for any need, or that He might gain

some honour to Himself from men, archangels, or angels, as the tribute or rent to be paid to Him from His creation," as Clemens Alexandrinus observes out of Plato. Though I know not how it comes about that some bring in God, as it were planning how He might erect a new monopoly of glory to Himself, and so, to serve this purpose, made the world, that He might have a stock of glory contained in it. And I doubt we are wont sometimes to paint Him forth too much in the likeness of corrupt and impotent men, that by a fond ambition please themselves, and feed their lustful fancies with their own praises chanted out to them by their admirers; and another while as much sport themselves and applaud their own greatness, to hear what hideous cries the severity of their own power can extort from those they have a mind to make miserable.

6.—Of the Glory of God.

WE all speak much of the *Glory of God*, and entertain a common belief of that being the only end for which we were all made: and I wish we were all more inwardly moved with a true and lively sense of it. There can be nothing else that either God could propound to Himself, or that we ought, if it be rightly understood. But we must not think that God, who is infinite fulness, would seek for any thing without Himself: He needs neither our happiness nor our misery, in order to make

Himself more illustrious; but, being full in Himself, it was His good pleasure to communicate of His own fulness: for, as Proclus hath well observed, "How can He look without Himself, seeing He is a pure mind, always encompassed with its own glorious brightness? But the good pleasure of His will being filled with bounty, and the power of a most gracious Deity proceeding from it, liberally dispensed themselves, and distributed those gifts of grace that might make all created being the more to resemble that archetypal idea of themselves." Accordingly Timæus Locrus represents the Creator of the world in the same strain that Moses did, delighted, as it were, in Himself to see that all things that He had made were good, and some things exceeding good. God Himself being infinitely full, and having enough and to spare, is always overflowing; and goodness and love issue forth from Him by way of redundancy. When he made the world, because there was nothing better than Himself, He shadowed forth Himself therein, and, as far as might be, was pleased to represent Himself and manifest His own eternal glory and perfection in it. When He is said to seek His own glory, it is, indeed, nothing else but to ray and beam forth, as it were, His own lustre; as R. Jehuda in his book Cosri hath glanced at it: "this glory is a spark of the light of God going forth for the good of his people upon the earth."

God does then most glorify and exalt Himself in the most triumphant way that may be, *ad extra*, or out of

Himself, if I may so phrase it, when He most of all communicates Himself, and when He erects such monuments of His own majesty, wherein His own love and goodness may live and reign.

And we then most of all glorify Him, when we partake most of Him; when our serious endeavours after a true assimilation to Him, and conformity to His image, declare that we think nothing better than He is, and are, therefore, most ambitious of being one with Him, by a universal resignation of ourselves unto Him.

This is His glory in its lowest humiliation, while it beams forth out of Himself; and our happiness in its exaltation, which heaven never separates nor divides, though earth doth. His honour is His love and goodness in paraphrase, spreading itself over all those that can or do receive it; and this He loves and cherishes wheresoever He finds it, as something of Himself therein.

7.—*Of Divine Providence.*

THAT Almighty wisdom and goodness which first made all things, doth also perpetually conserve and govern them; extending themselves through the whole fabric, and seating themselves in every finite essence, "lest straggling and falling off from the Deity, they should become altogether disorderly,"* relapsing and sliding back

* Proclus.

into their first chaos. As in all motion there must be some first mover, from whence the beginning and perpetuation of all motion is deduced; so in beings there must be some first essence upon which all other must constantly depend. For as no finite thing can subsist by its own strength, or take its place upon the stage of space without the leave of an Almighty and Supreme power: so neither can it remain here without license and assistance from it. The Deity, indeed, is the centre of all finite being, and entity itself, which is self-sufficient, must, of necessity, be the foundation and basis of every one of these weak essences, which cannot bear up themselves by any central power of their own; as we may also be almost assured of, from a sensible feeling of all the constant mutations and impotency which we find both in ourselves and all other things.

And as God thus preserves all things, so He is continually ordering and disposing all things in the best way, and providing so as may be best for them. He did not make the world as a mere exercise of His Almighty power, or to try His own strength, and then throw it away from Himself without any further attention to it; for He is that Omnipresent Life that penetrates and runs through all things, containing and holding all fast together within Himself; and, therefore, the ancient philosophy was wont rather to say, that the world was in God, than that God was in the world. He did not look without Himself to search for some solid foundation that might bear up this

weighty building, but indeed reared it up within Him, and spread His own Omnipotency under it and through it: and, being centrally in every part of it, He governs it according to the prescript of His own unsearchable wisdom and goodness, and orders all things for the best.

And now, if any should quarrel with the unequal distribution of things here, as if rather some blind fortune had bestowed her blessings carelessly till she had no more left, and thereby made so many starvelings, rather than some all-knowing mind that deals forth its bounty in due proportions; I should send them to Plutarch and Plotinus to have their reasons fully satisfied on this point,—for we here deal with the principles of natural light—all these debates arising from nothing but pedantical and carnal notions of good and evil: as if it were so gallant a thing to be dealing with crowns and sceptres, to be bravely arrayed, and wallow in that which is called the wealth of this world. God indeed never took any such notice of good men as to make them all rulers, as the last of those fore-cited authors tells us; neither was it worth the while, "neither is it fit for good men that partake of a higher life than the most princely is, to trouble themselves about lording and ruling over other men;"* as if such a splendid kind of nothing as this is, were of so much worth. It may be generally much better for us, while we are so apt to magnify and court any mundane beauty and glory as we

* Plotinus.

are, that Providence should disorder and deface these things, that we might all be weaned from the love of them, than that their lovely looks should so bewitch and enchant our souls as to draw them off from better things. And I dare say, that a sober mind that shall contemplate the state and temper of men's minds, and the confused frame of this outward world, will rather admire the infinite wisdom of a gracious Providence in permitting and ordering that *ataxy* (i.e., disorder) which is in it, than he would were it to be beheld in a more comely frame and order.

7.—*Of Happiness and Misery.*

HAPPINESS is nothing else, as we usually describe it to ourselves, but the enjoyment of some chief good: and therefore the Deity is so boundlessly happy, because it is every way one with its own immense perfection; and every thing so much the more feelingly lives upon happiness, by how much the more it comes to partake of God, and to be made like to Him: and, therefore, the Platonists well defined it to consist *in idea boni.* And, as it is impossible to enjoy happiness without a fruition of God; so it is impossible to enjoy Him without an assimilation and conformity of our natures to Him in a way of true goodness and godlike perfection. It is a common maxim of Socrates that "it is not lawful for any impure nature to touch pure divinity." For we cannot enjoy God by any external conjunction with Him: divine fruition is not by

a mere kind of apposition or contiguity of our natures with the divine, but it is an internal union, whereby a divine spirit, informing our souls, sends the strength of a divine life through them; and as this is more strong and active, so is happiness itself more energetical within us. It must be some divine efflux running quite through our souls, awakening and exalting all the vital powers of them into an active sympathy with some absolute good, that renders us completely blessed. It is not to sit gazing upon a deity by some thin speculations; but it is an inward feeling and sensation of this mighty goodness displaying itself within us, melting our fierce and furious natures, that would fain be something in contradiction to God, into a universal compliance with itself, and wrapping up our amorous minds wholly into itself, whereby God comes to be all in all to us. And therefore, so long as our wills and affections endeavour to fix upon any thing but God and true goodness, we do indeed but anxiously endeavour to wring happiness out of something that will yield no more than a flinty rock to all our pressing and forcing. The more we endeavour to force our affections to stay and rest themselves upon any finite thing, the more violently will they recoil back again upon us. It is only a true sense and relish of God, that can tame and master that rage of our insatiable and restless desires, which is still forcing us out of ourselves to seek some perfect good—that which, from a latent sense of our own souls, we feel ourselves to want.

The foundation of heaven and hell is laid in men's own souls, in an ardent and vehement appetite after happiness, which can neither attain to it, nor finally miss it and all appearances of it, without a quick and piercing sense. Our souls are not like so many lumps of matter dead and senseless to a true living happiness; they are not like these dull clods of earth which discern not the good or ill savour of those plants that grow upon them. Gain and loss are very sensibly felt by greedy minds. The soul of man was made with such a large capacity as it has, that so it might be better fitted to entertain a full and liberal happiness; that the Divine love and goodness might more freely spread itself in it, and unite it to itself. And, accordingly, when it misseth God, it must feel so much the more the fury and pangs of misery, and find a severe Nemesis arising out of its guilty conscience, which, like a fiery scorpion, will fasten its stings within it. And thus, as heaven, love, joy, peace, serenity, and all that which happiness is, buds and blossoms out of holy and godlike spirits; so also hell and misery will perpetually spring out of impure minds, distracted with envy, malice, ambition, self-will, or any inordinate loves to any particular thing.

This is that fatal law that Plato speaks of, that is first made in heaven's consistory, "that purity and holiness shall be happy, and all vice and sin miserable." Holiness of mind will be more and more attracting God to itself, as all vice will lapse and slide more and more from Him. The more pure our souls are, and abstracted

from all mundane things, the more sincerely will they strive after the nearest union that may be with God; the more will they pant and breathe after Him alone, leaving the chase of any other delight. There is such a noble and free-born spirit in true goodness seated in immortal natures, as will not be satisfied merely with innocency, nor rest itself in this mixed bodily state, though it could converse with bodily things without sinking to a vicious love of them; but would always be returning to a more intimate union with that Being from whom it came, and who will be drawing it more and more to Himself: and, therefore, it seems very reasonable to believe that, if Adam had continued in a state of innocency, he would have been raised by God to a greater fruition of Him, and his nature would have been elevated to a more transcendent condition. And, if there was any covenant made with Adam in Paradise, I think we cannot understand it in any other sense than this: the Scripture speaks not of any other terms between God and man. And this *law of life*, which we have spoken of, is eternal and immutable; nor does the dispensation of grace by Christ Jesus at all abrogate or disannul, but rather enforce it: for so we find that the law of Christ—that which He gave out to all His disciples—was this law of perfection that carries true happiness along in the sense of it, which, as the great Prince of souls, He dispenseth by His Eternal Spirit in a vital way unto the minds of men.

8.—Of the Divine Justice.

WE may further collect how to state rightly the notion of *the Divine Justice*, the scope whereof is nothing else but to assert and establish eternal law and right, and to preserve the integrity thereof: it is no design of vengeance, in which God takes no delight, though He inflicts it on wicked men. The Divine Justice first prescribes that which is most conformable to the Divine Nature, and mainly proposes the conservation of righteousness. We should not think him a good ruler, that should give out laws to ensnare his subjects, with an even indifferency of mind whether his laws should be kept, or punishment suffered; but such a one as should make the best security for right and equity by wholesome laws, and annexing punishment as a means to prevent transgression, and not to manifest severity. The proper scope of justice seems to be nothing else but the preserving and maintaining that which is just and right: the scope of that justice which is in any righteous law, is properly to provide for a righteous execution of that which is just and fit to be, without intending punishment; for to intend that properly and directly, might rather seem cruelty than justice: and, therefore, justice takes not up punishment, except only for securing the performance of righteous laws, viz. either for the amendment of the person transgressing, or a due example to others to keep them off from transgression. For I would here suppose a good and right-

eous man, who, in some desolate place of the world, should have the command of a hundred more, and himself be supreme and under no command. He prescribes laws to this company; makes it death for any one to take away another's life. But now one proves a murderer, kills one of his fellows; afterwards, repents heartily, and is likely to prove useful among the rest of his fellows: they all are so heartily affected one to another, that there is no danger, upon sparing this penitent's life, that any one of them should be encouraged to commit the like evil. The case being thus stated, it will not seem difficult to conclude that the justice of this righteous and good commander would spare this poor penitent: for his justice would have preserved that life which is lost, and seeing there is nothing further that it can obtain in taking away this, it will save this which may be saved; for it affects not any blood; and when it destroys, it is out of necessity, to take away a destructive person, and to give example, which, in the case stated, falls not out.

Again: justice is the justice of goodness, and so cannot delight to punish; it aims at nothing more than the maintaining and promoting the laws of goodness, and hath always some good end before it, and, therefore, would never punish, except some further good were in view.

True justice never supplants any that itself may appear more glorious in their ruin; for this would be to make justice love something better than righteousness, and to

advance and magnify itself in something which is not itself, but rather an aberration from itself: and, therefore, God Himself so earnestly contends with the Jews about the equity of His own ways, with frequent asseverations that His justice is thirsty after no man's blood, but rather that sinners would repent, turn from their evil ways, and live. And then justice is most advanced, when the contents of it are fulfilled; and though it does not, and will not, acquit the guilty without repentance, yet the design of it is to encourage innocency, and promote true goodness.

9.—Of the Divine Laws.

GOD Himself, from whom all law takes its rise and emanation, is not outside of and without all law, nor, in a sober sense, above it. Neither are the primitive rules of His economy in this world the sole results of an absolute will, but the sacred decrees of reason and goodness. I cannot think God to be so unbounded in His legislative power, that He can make every thing law, both for His own dispensations and our observance, that we may sometime imagine. We cannot say, indeed, that God was absolutely determined from some law within Himself to make us; but I think we may safely say, when He had once determined to make us, He could neither make us sinful, seeing He had no idea nor shadow of evil within Himself; nor wrap up those dread-

ful fates within our natures, or set them over us, that might, "by a secret inspiration," (as some are pleased to phrase it) secretly work our ruin, and silently carry us on, making use of our own natural infirmity, to eternal misery. Neither could He design to make His creatures miserable, that so He might show Himself just. These are rather the byways of cruel and ambitious men, that seek their own advantage in the mischief of other men, and contrive their own rise by their ruin: this is not Divine Justice, but the cruelty of degenerated men.

But, as the Divinity could propound nothing to itself in the making of the world, but the communication of its own love and goodness; so it can never swerve from the same scope and end in the dispensation of itself to it. Neither did God so boundlessly enlarge the appetite of souls after some all-sufficient good, that so they might be the more unspeakably tortured in the missing of it; but that they might more certainly return to the original of their beings. And such busy-working essences as the souls of men are, could neither be made as dull and senseless of true happiness as stocks and stones are; neither could they contain the whole sum and perfection of it within themselves: therefore they must also be informed with such principles as may conduct them back again to Him from whom they first came. God does not make creatures, for the mere sport of His Almighty arm, to raise and ruin, and toss up and down, at mere pleasure. No: that good pleasure of that will that made

them is the same still: it changes not, though we may change, and make ourselves incapable of partaking the blissful fruits and effects of it.

10.—Of the Law of Nature.

AND so we come to consider that law embosomed in the souls of men which ties them again to their Creator, and this is called *the law of nature;* which, indeed, is nothing else but a paraphrase or comment upon the nature of God, as it copies forth itself in the soul of man.

Because God is the first mind and the first good, propagating an imitation of Himself in such immortal natures as the souls of men are; therefore ought the soul to renounce all mortal and mundane things, and preserve its affections chaste and pure for God Himself; to love Him with a most universal and unbounded love; to trust in Him and reverence Him; to converse with Him in a free and cheerful manner, as one "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" being perpetually encompassed by Him, and never moving out of Him; to resign all our ways and wills up to Him with an equal and indifferent mind, as knowing that He guides and governs all things in the best way; to sink ourselves as low in humility, as we are in self-nothingness.

And because all those scattered rays of beauty and loveliness which we behold spread up and down over all

the world, are only the emanations of that inexhausted light which is above; therefore should we love them all in that, and climb up always, by those sunbeams, unto the eternal Father of Lights: we should look upon Him, and take from Him the pattern of our lives, and always eyeing Him, should "polish and shape our souls into the clearest resemblance of Him;" and in all our behaviour in this world—that great temple of His—deport ourselves decently and reverently, with that humility, meekness, and modesty, that become His house. We should endeavour more and more to be perfect, as He is; in all our dealings with men, doing good, showing mercy and compassion, advancing justice and righteousness, being always full of charity and good works; and look upon ourselves as having nothing to do here but to display and blazon the glory of our heavenly Father, and frame our hearts and lives according to that pattern which we behold in the mount of a holy contemplation of Him. Thus we should endeavour to preserve that heavenly fire of the divine love and goodness (which, issuing forth from God, centres itself within us, and is the protoplastic virtue of our being) always alive and burning in the temples of our souls, and to sacrifice ourselves back again to Him. And, when we fulfil this royal law arising out of the heart of Eternity, then shall we here appear to be "the children of God," when He thus lives in us, as our Saviour speaks.

11.—Of Positive Laws.

IT may be of good use to inquire into the reason of such laws as we call positive, to which God hath, in all times, as is commonly supposed, enjoined obedience; which are not the eternal dictates and decretals of the Divine nature communicating itself to immortal spirits, but rather deduce their original from the free will and pleasure of God.

To solve this difficulty, that of St. Paul may seem a fit medium, who tells us, "The law was added because of transgression;" though I doubt not but he means thereby the moral law, as well as any other. The true intent and scope of these positive laws, (and it may be of such an external promulgation of the moral) seems to be nothing else but this—to secure the eternal law of righteousness from transgression. As the Jews say of their *decreta sapientum*, that they were "a hedge to the law;" so we may say of these divine decretals, they were but cautionary and preventive of disobedience to that higher law: and therefore St. Paul tells us why the moral law was made such a political business by an external promulgation, &c., not so much because of righteous men, in whom the law of nature lives, who perform the things of the law without any outward law; but it was given "for the lawless and disobedient." And, therefore, I doubt not but we may safely conclude, that God gave not

those positive laws merely *pro imperio*, if I may use that expression: it was not merely to manifest His absolute dominion and sovereignty, as some think, but for the good of those that were enjoined to obey; and Moses endeavours almost throughout the whole book of Deuteronomy to strengthen the Israelites in this belief: and, therefore, God was so ready upon all occasions to dispense with these laws, and to require the Jews to omit the observance of them, when they might seem to justle with any other law of moral duty or human necessity—as may be observed in many instances in Scripture.

But, for a more distinct unfolding of this point, we may take notice of this difference in the notion of good and evil, as we are to converse with them. Some things are so *absolutely*, and some things are so only *relatively*. That which is absolutely good, is every way superior to us, and we ought always to be commanded by it, because we are made under it: but that which is relatively good to us, may sometime be commanded by us. Eternal truth and righteousness are in themselves perfectly and absolutely good, and the more we conform ourselves to them, the better we are. But those things that are good only relatively and in order to us, we may say of them, that they are so much the better, by how much the more they are conformed to us; I mean, by how much the more they are accommodated and fitted to our estate and condition, and may be fit means to help and promote us in our pursuit of some higher good: and such,

indeed, is the matter of all positive laws, and the symbolical or ritual part of religion. And, as we are made for the former, viz. what is absolutely good, to serve that; so are these latter made for us, as our Saviour hath taught us, when He tells us that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:" and, as sincere and real Christians grow up towards true perfection, the less need have they of positive precepts or external helps. Yet, I doubt, it is nothing else but a wanton *fastus* and proud temper of spirit in our times, that makes so many talk of being above ordinances, who, if their own arrogance and presumption would give them leave to lay aside the flattering glass of their own self-love, would find themselves to have most need of them.

12.—Of Everlasting Righteousness.

THIS is the righteousness which is of an eternal and immutable nature, as being a conformity with eternal and unchangeable truth. For there is a righteousness which thus is not eternal, but positive, and at the pleasure of God that dictates it: and such was the righteousness which Christ said "it became Him to fulfil" when he was baptized; there was *no necessity* that any such thing should become due. But the foundation of this everlasting righteousness is something unalterable. To speak more particularly. That the highest good should be loved in the highest degree; that dependent

creatures, that borrow all they have from God, should never glory in themselves, or admire themselves, but ever admire and adore that unbounded goodness which is the source of their being, and all the good they partake of; that we should always do that which is just and right, according to the measure we would others should do with us: these, and some other things which a rectified reason will easily supply, are immutably true and righteous; so that it never was, nor can be, true, that they are unnecessary. And whoso hath his heart moulded into a delight in such a righteousness and the practice thereof, hath this eternal righteousness brought into his soul; which righteousness is also true and real, not like that imaginary external righteousness of the law, in which the Pharisees boasted.

OF PROPHECY.

1.—Of Positive Truth.

THOUGH our own reason and understanding carry all *natural* truth necessary for practice in any sort, engraven upon themselves, and folded up in their own essences more immediately, as being the first participations of the Divine Mind considered in its own eternal nature: yet *positive* truth can only be made known to us by a free influx of the Divine Mind upon our minds and understandings. And as it ariseth out of nothing else but the free pleasure of the Divinity, so, without any natural determination, it freely shines upon the souls of men where and when it listeth, hiding its light from them, or displaying it forth upon them, as it pleaseth.

Yet the souls of men are as capable of conversing with it, though it do not naturally arise out of the fecundity of their own understandings, as they are with any sensible and external objects. And as our sensations carry the notions of material things to our understandings, which before were unacquainted with them; so there is some analogical way, whereby the knowledge of Divine Truth may also be revealed to us. For so we may call, as well that historical truth of corporeal and material things, which we are informed of by our senses, truth of revelation, as that Divine Truth of which we now speak: and, therefore, we may have as certain and infallible a way of

being acquainted with the one, as with the other. And God, having so contrived the nature of our souls, that we may converse one with another, and inform one another of things we knew not before, would not make us so deaf to His Divine voice that breaks the rocks, and rends the mountains asunder; He would not make us so undisciplinable in divine things, as that we should not be capable of receiving any impressions from Himself of those things with which we were before unacquainted. And this way of communicating truth to the souls of men is originally nothing else but *prophetical.*

2.—Of a Main End of the Prophetical Spirit.

ONE main end and scope of the prophetical spirit seems to be the quickening up of our minds to a more lively converse with those eternal truths of reason, which commonly lie buried in so much fleshly obscurity within us, that we discern them not. And, therefore, the Scripture treats, not only of those pieces of truth which are the results of God's free counsels, but also of those which are most akin and allied to our own understandings, and that in the greatest way of condescension that may be, speaking to the weakest sort of men in the most vulgar sort of dialect.

3.—Of the Language of Scripture.

DIVINE truth hath its *humiliation* and *exinanition*, as well as its *exaltation.* Divine truth becomes many times in Scripture incarnate, debasing itself to assume our

rude conceptions, that so it might converse more freely with us, and infuse its own Divinity into us. God having been pleased herein to manifest Himself not more jealous of His own glory, than He is (as I may say) zealous of our good. "We have not ears as God has speech." If He should speak in the language of eternity, who could understand Him, or interpret His meaning? or if He should have declared His truth to us, only in a way of the purest abstraction that human souls are capable of, how should then the more rude and illiterate sort of men have been able to apprehend it? Truth is content, when it comes into the world, to wear our mantles, to learn our language; to conform itself, as it were, to our dress and fashions: it affects not that state, or *fastus*, which the disdainful rhetorician sets out his style withal: but it speaks with the most idiotical sort of men in the most idiotical way, and becomes all things to all men, as every son of truth should do, for their good. And therefore, it may be, the best way to understand the true sense and meaning of the Scripture, is not rigidly to examine it upon philosophical interrogatories, or to bring it under the scrutiny of school definitions and distinctions. It speaks not to us so much in the tongue of the learned philosophers of the world, as in the plainest and most vulgar dialect that may be. This the Jews constantly observed and took notice of; and, therefore, it was one common rule among them for a true understanding of the Scripture, "the law speaks with the tongue of the sons of men."

The Scripture was not writ for sagacious and abstracted minds only, or philosophical heads; for then how few are there that should have been taught the true knowledge of God thereby? We are not always rigidly to adhere to the very letter of the text. We must not think that it always gives us formal definitions of things, for it speaks commonly according to vulgar apprehension: as when it tells of "the ends of the heaven," which now almost every idiot knows hath no ends at all. So when it tells us that "God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul;" the expression is very idiomatical as may be, and seems to comply with that vulgar conceit, that the soul of man is nothing else but a kind of vital breath or air: and yet the immortality thereof is evidently alluded to in setting forth a double original of the two parts of man, his body and his soul; the one of which is brought in as arising up out of the dust of the earth, the other as proceeding from the breath of God Himself.

4.—Of the Prophetical.

THIS is thus defined to us by Maimonides: "The true essence of prophecy is nothing else but an influence from the Deity first upon the rational, and afterwards upon the imaginative faculty, by the mediation of the active intellect." This definition belongs, indeed, to prophecy as it is technically so called, and distinguished

by Maimonides, both from that degree of Divine illumination which was above it, which the masters constantly attribute to Moses, and from that other degree inferior to it, which they call—*Spiritus Sanctus*—that Holy Spirit that moved in the souls of the *hagiographi.*

But Rabbi Joseph Albo hath given us a wider description, so as to take in also the *gradus Mosaicus:* "Prophecy is an influence from God upon the rational faculty, either by the mediation of the fancy or otherwise: and this influence, whether by the ministry of an angel or otherwise, makes a man to know such things as, by his natural abilities, he could not attain to the knowledge of." Though here, our author seems too much to have straitened the latitude of prophetical influence, whereby (as we intimated before) not only those pieces of divine truth may be communicated to the souls of men, which are not contained within their own ideas, but also those may be excited, which have a necessary connexion with, and dependence upon, reason.

But the main thing that we shall observe in this description is, that faculty or power of the soul, upon which these extraordinary impressions of divine light or influence are made; which, in all proper prophecy, is both the rational and imaginative power. For, in this case, they supposed the imaginative power to be set forth as a *stage*, upon which certain *visa* and *simulacra* were represented to their understandings, just indeed as they are to us in our common dreams; only that the under-

standings of the prophets were always kept awake and strongly acted upon by God in the midst of these apparitions, to see the intelligible mysteries in them, and so, in these types and shadows, which were symbols of some spiritual things, to behold the antitypes themselves. But in case the imaginative faculty be not thus set forth as the scene of all prophetical illumination, but only the impressions of things, nakedly, without any schemes or pictures, be made immediately upon the understanding itself, then is it reckoned to be the *gradus Mosaicus*, wherein God speaks, as it were "face to face."

OF LEGAL AND EVANGELICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1.—Of the Principles of True Religion.

THE doctrine of the Christian religion propounded to us by our Saviour and His apostles, is set forth with so much simplicity, and yet with so much repugnancy to that degenerate genius and spirit that rules in the hearts and lives of men, that we may truly say of it, it is both the easiest and the hardest thing: it is a revelation wrapt up in a complication of mysteries, like that book of the Apocalypse, which both unfolds and hides those great arcana that it treats of; or, as Plato sometimes chose so to explain the secrets of his metaphysical or theological philosophy,—that he that read might not be able to understand, except he were a son of wisdom, and had been trained up in the knowledge of it. The principles of true religion are all in themselves plain and easy, delivered in the most familiar way, so that he that runs may read them; they are all so clear and perspicuous, that they need no key of analytical demonstration to unlock them: the Scripture being written *doctis pariter et indoctis*, and yet it is "wisdom in a mystery, which the princes of this world understand not;" a sealed book with which the greatest philosophers may be most unacquainted: it is like that pillar of fire and of a cloud

that parted between the Israelites and the Egyptians, giving a clear and comfortable light to all those that are under the manuduction and guidance thereof, but being full of darkness and obscurity to those that rebel against it. Divine truth is not to be discerned so much in a man's *brain*, as in his *heart*. Divine wisdom is a *tree of life* to them that find her, and it is only life that can feelingly converse with life. All the thin speculations and subtilest discourses of philosophy cannot so well unfold or define any sensible object, or tell any one so well what it is, as his own naked sense will do. There is a divine and spiritual sense which only is able to converse internally with the life and soul of divine truth, as mixing and uniting itself with it; while vulgar minds behold only the body and outside of it. Though in itself it be most intelligible, and such as man's mind may most easily apprehend; yet there is "a covering of uncleanness" upon all corrupt minds, which hinders the lively taste and relish of it. This is that thick and palpable darkness which cannot comprehend that divine light that shines in the minds and understandings of all men, but makes them deny that very truth which they seem to entertain. "The world through wisdom (as the apostle speaks) knew not God." Those great disputers of this world were too full of nice and empty speculations, to know Him who is only to be discerned by a pacate, humble, and self-denying mind: their curiosity served rather to dazzle their eyes than to enlighten them; while

they rather proudly braved themselves in their knowledge of the Deity, than humbly subjected their own souls to a compliance with it; making the Divinity nothing else but, as it were, a flattering glass that might the better reflect and set off to them the beauty of their own wit and parts: and while they seemed to converse with God Himself, they rather amorously courted their own image in Him, and fell into love with their own shape. Therefore the best acquaintance with religion is "a knowledge taught by God:" it is a light that descends from heaven, which only is able to guide and conduct the souls of men to heaven, from whence it comes. The Jewish doctors usually put it among the fundamental articles of their religion, "That their law was from heaven:" I am sure we may much rather reckon it amongst the principles of our Christian religion in a higher way, that it is an influx from God upon the minds of good men. And this is the great design and plot of the gospel, to open and unfold to us the true way of recourse to God; a contrivance for uniting the souls of men to Him, and deriving a participation of God to men, to bring in "everlasting righteousness," and to establish the true tabernacle of God in the spirits of men, which was done in a typical and emblematical way under the law. And herein consists the main pre-eminence which the gospel hath above the law, in that it so clearly unfolds the way and method of uniting human nature to Divinity.

2.—Of the Difference between the Law and the Gospel.

THE law was the ministry of death, and in itself an external and lifeless thing, neither could it procure or beget that divine life, and spiritual form of godliness, in the souls of men, which God expects from all the heirs of glory, nor that glory which is only consequent upon a true divine life. Whereas, on the other side, the gospel is set forth as a mighty efflux and emanation of life and spirit, freely issuing forth from an Omnipotent source of grace and love, as that true godlike vital influence, whereby the Divinity derives itself into the souls of men, enlivening and transforming them into its own likeness, and strongly imprinting upon them a copy of its own beauty and goodness: like the spermatical virtue of the heavens, which spreads itself freely upon this lower world, and subtilely insinuating itself into this benumbed, feeble, earthly matter, begets life and motion in it. Briefly,—It is that whereby God comes to dwell in us, and we in Him.

3.—Of the Same as laid down by St. Paul in his Epistles.

THE true difference between the Law and the Gospel, as it seems evidently to be laid down every where by St. Paul in his epistles, is clearly this, viz. That the Law was merely an external thing, consisting in such precepts as had only an outward administration; but the Gospel is an internal thing, a vital form and principle

seating itself in the minds and spirits of men. And this is the most proper and formal difference between the Law and the Gospel, that the one is considered only as an *external* administration, and the other as an *internal.* And, therefore, the apostle calls the Law, "the ministration of the letter and of death,"* it being in itself but a dead letter; as all that which is without a man's soul must needs be. But, on the other side, he calls the Gospel, because of the intrinsical and vital administration thereof in living impressions upon the souls of men, "the ministration of the spirit," and "the ministration of righteousness." By this he cannot mean the history of the Gospel, or those *credenda* propounded to us to believe; for this would make the Gospel itself as much an external thing as the law was, and, according to the external administration, as much a killing or dead letter as the Law was: and so we see that the preaching of "Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."† But, indeed, he means a vital efflux from God upon the souls of men, whereby they are "made partakers of life and strength" from Him: and therefore he thus exegetically expounds his own meaning of that short description of the Law, namely, that it was διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν, ἐντετυπωμένη ἐν λίθοις·‡ which, I think, may be fitly thus translated—"it was a dead, or lifeless, administration," (for

* 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. † 1 Cor. i. 23. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 7.

so sometimes, by a Hebraism, the genitive case *in regimine* is put for the adjective); or else "an administration of death exhibited in letters, and engraven in tables of stone:" and therefore he tells us what the effect of it was in those words, "The letter killeth"—as, indeed, all external precepts which have not a proper, vital, radication in the souls of men, whereby they are able to secure them from the transgression of them, must needs do. Now to this dead or killing letter he opposes a quickening spirit, or "the ministration of the Spirit;" which, afterwards he expounds by "the ministration of righteousness," that is, the evangelical administration. So that the gospel or evangelical administration must be an internal impression, a vivacious and energetical spirit and principle of righteousness in the souls of men, whereby they are inwardly enabled to express a real conformity thereto. Upon this ground the apostle further pursues the effects of both these, from the fourteenth verse to the end.

By all this the apostle means to set forth to us how vast a difference there is between the external manifestations of God in a law of commandments, and those internal appearances of God, whereby he discovers the mighty power of His goodness to the souls of men.

Though the history and outward communication of the Gospel to us *in scriptis*, is to be always acknowledged as a special mercy and advantage, and certainly no less privilege to Christians than it was to the Jews, to be the

depositaries of the oracles of God; yet it is plain that the apostle, where he compares the Law and the Gospel, and in other places, doth, by the Gospel, mean something which is more than a piece of book-learning, or a historical narration of the free love of God, in the several contrivances of it for the redemption of mankind. For if this were all that is meant properly by the Gospel, I see no reason why it should not be counted as weak and impotent a thing, as dead a letter as the Law was, as we intimated before; and so there would be no such vast difference between them as the apostle asserts there is; the one being properly an external declaration of God's will, the other an internal manifestation of divine life upon men's souls: and, therefore, he so distinguisheth between this double dispensation of God, that this evangelical dispensation is a vital and quickening thing, able to beget a soul and form of divine goodness upon the souls of men; which because the Law could not do, it was laid aside, as being insufficient to restore man to the favour of God, or to make him partaker of His righteousness. "If there had been a law given which could have given life,—verily righteousness should have been by the law;"* where, by "righteousness," he seems to mean the same thing which he meant by it, when in his Epistle to the Corinthians he calls the economy of the gospel "the ministration of righteousness," or as "innocency" is taken

* Gal. iii. 21.

among the Jewish writers for acceptance with God, and that internal form of righteousness that qualifies the soul for eternal life; and so he takes it in a far more large and ample sense than that external righteousness of justification is: and, indeed, it seems to express the just state of those who are renewed by the Spirit of God, and made partakers of that divine life which is emphatically called the seed of God. For this "righteousness," which he here speaks of, is the proper result of an enlivening and quickening law, which is this new law of the Gospel, in opposition to that old law which was administered only *in scriptis;* and, therefore, this new law is called, in the Epistle to the Hebrews,* "the better covenant," whereas the old was faulty. In which place this is put down as the formal difference between the legal and the evangelical administration, or the old and the new covenant; that the old covenant was only externally promulged, and wrapt up, as it were, in ink and parchment, or, at best, engraven upon tables of stone; whereas this new covenant is set forth in living characters imprinted upon the vital powers of men's souls, "This is the covenant that I will make, &c. I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts:" and, therefore, the old covenant is said not to be an unblameable or faultless thing because it was not able to keep off transgressions, or hinder the violation of

* Chapter viii. 6, &c.

itself, any more than an inscription upon some pillar or monument is able to inspire life into those that read it and converse with it: the old law, or covenant, being in this respect no other than all other civil constitutions are, which receive their efficacy merely from the willing compliance of men's minds with them, so that they must be enlivened by the subject that receives them, being dead things in themselves. But the evangelical or new law is such a thing as is an efflux of life and power from God Himself the original thereof, and produceth life wheresoever it comes. And to this double dispensation, viz. of law and gospel, doth St. Paul clearly refer: "Ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone:" which last words are a plain gloss upon that mundane kind of administering the Law in a mere external way, to which he opposeth the Gospel. And this argument he further pursues in the seventh and eighth chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, in which last chapter he styles the gospel "the law and the spirit of life," which was able to destroy the power of sin, and to introduce such a spiritual and heavenly frame of soul into men, as might enable them to express a cheerful compliance with the law of God, and demonstrate a true, heavenly, conversation and godlike life in this world.

We read in Iamblichus and others, of the many preparatory experiments used by Pythagoras to try his scholars, whether they were fit to receive the more sublime and

sacred pieces of his philosophy; and that he was wont to communicate these only to souls, in a due degree purified and prepared for such doctrine. And what did all this signify but only this, that he might, by all these methods, work and mould the minds of his hearers into such a fit temper, as that he might the better stamp the seal of his more divine doctrine upon them, and that his discourses to them "of things just and lovely and good," might be written "truly and really in the soul," that I may use Plato's words in his *Phædrus*, where he commends the impressions of truth which are made upon men's souls above all outward writings, which he therefore compares to dead pictures. By this we see what the wisest and best philosophers thought of this internal writing; but it peculiarly belongs to God to write the laws of goodness in the tables of men's hearts. All the outward teachings of men are but dead things in themselves. But God's imprinting His mind and will upon men's hearts is properly that which is called the teaching of God, and then they become living laws written in the living tables of men's hearts, fitted to receive and retain divine impressions.

And that we may come a little nearer to these words upon which all this present discourse is built, this seems to be the scope of his argument in this place, where this "law of righteousness," may fairly be paralleled with that which before he called "the law of the spirit," and which he therefore calls "the righteousness of faith," because it is received from God in a way of believing. For I can-

not easily think that he should mean nothing else in this place but merely the righteousness of justification, as some would persuade us, but rather that his sense is much more comprehensive, so as to include the state of gospel-dispensation, which includes, not only pardon of sins, but an inward spirit "of love, power, and of a sound mind," as he expresseth it. And this he thus opposeth to the Law. "But the righteousness of faith speaketh on this wise; Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, &c., or, Who shall descend into the deep? But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach." And thus the life and salvation that results from the righteousness of faith itself is all, as faith itself is, derived from God, gratuitously dispensing Himself to the minds of men: whereas, if life could have been by the law, its original and principle must have been resolved into men themselves, who must have acted upon that dead matter without them, and have produced that virtue and energy in it, by their exercising themselves therein, which of itself it had not; as the observance of any law enables that law itself to dispense that reward which is due to the observance of it: and therefore the righteousness of the law was so defined that "he that did those things should live in them." And thus the New Testament everywhere seems to present to us this twofold dispensation or œconomy, the one consisting in an

external and written law of precepts, the other in inward life and power.

4.—Of the Superiority of the Gospel.

NOW from all this we may easily apprehend how much the righteousness of the gospel transcends that of the law, in that it hath indeed a true command over the inward man which it acts upon and informs; whereas the law, by all its menaces and punishments, could only compel men to an external observance of it in the outward man; as the schoolmen have well observed: "The old law binds the hand, the new law binds the soul."

And herein St. Paul every where magnifies this dispensation of the free mercy and grace of God, as being the only sovereign remedy against all the inward radicated maladies of sin and corruption, as that *panacea* or *balsamum vitæ* which is the universal restorative of decayed and impotent nature. So he tells us, "Sin shall not have dominion, because we are not under the law, but under grace." And this is that which made him so much extol his acquaintance with Christ in the dispensation of grace, and to despise all things as loss; when, among his other Jewish privileges, having reckoned up his blamelessness in all points touching the law, he undervalues them all, and counts all but loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." In this place* the apostle doth

* Phil. iii. 8.

not mean to disparage a real, inward, righteousness, and the strict observance of the law; but his meaning is to show how poor and worthless a thing all outward observances of the law are, in comparison with a true, internal, conformity to Christ in the renovation of the mind and soul according to His image and likeness; as is manifest from vers. 9, 10, &c., in which he thus delivers his own meaning of that "knowledge of Christ" which he so much extolled, very emphatically: "That I may be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Where, by the way, we may further take notice what this "righteousness of faith," and "righteousness of God," (which we have already spoken much of) is, according to his own true meaning, as he expounds himself, viz., a Christ-like nature in a man's soul, or Christ appearing in the minds of men by the mighty power of His Divine Spirit, and thereby deriving a true participation of Himself to them: so he adds, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." And thus Christ and Moses are opposed, as Christ is the Dispenser of grace and truth, of God's free and gratuitous bounty, of life and substance: whereas Moses was but the minister of the Law, of rites and shadows.

5.—Of the Typicalness of the Jewish Economy.

BEFORE our Saviour's coming, the great mysteries of religion being wrapt up in hieroglyphics and symbolical rites, (the unfolding of all which was reserved for Him who is the great Interpreter of heaven and Master of truth), God was pleased to draw forth a scheme or copy of all that divine œconomy and method of His commerce with mankind, and to make a draught of the whole artifice thereof in external matter: and, therefore, He singled out a company and society of men of the same common extraction, marked out from all other sorts of men by a character of genealogical sanctity, (for so circumcision was), collected and united together by a common band of brotherhood; and this He set up as an emblem of a divine and holy seed or society of men, which are all, by way of spiritual generation, descended from Himself. And hence it is that the Jews, (the whole Jewish nation universally considered) who were but a mere representative of this spiritual fraternity and congregation, are called the holy seed, or the holy people. Then afterwards, amongst these, He erects a government and polity, and rules over them in the way and manner of a political prince, as hath been long since well observed by Josephus, who, therefore, properly calls the Jewish government "a theocracy," or "the government of God Himself."

And thus, in a scheme or figure, He shadows forth that spiritual kingdom and government which He would

establish amongst that divine society of men, in reference to which we have so much mention made of "the kingdom of heaven" in the gospel; which is not generally and solely meant of the state of glory, much less of any outward church rites, but mainly of that idea and exemplar, of which the Jewish theocracy was an imitation. *Lastly*, As a political prince, God draws forth a body of laws, as the political constitutions and rules of this government which He had set up, choosing mount Sinai for the theatre whereon He would promulge those laws by which all His subjects should be governed. And so, I doubt not but that preface by which the law is ushered in, which speaks of God's mercy in delivering them from the Egyptian thraldom, may very well be allegorized and mystically expounded. And all this was to signify and set forth that law which was to go forth from mount Sion, the promulgation whereof was to be, in a vital and spiritual way, among the subjects of this spiritual kingdom. To all this we may add those temporal inheritances which He distributed to the Jewish families, in imitation of that eternal blessedness, and those immortal inheritances, which He shares out amongst His spiritual sons and subjects in heaven. And this I the rather add, because here the Jews are much perplexed about untying this knot, namely, what the reason should be that their law speaks so sparingly of any eternal reward, but runs out generally in promises of mundane and earthly blessings in the land of Canaan. But by this we

may see the true reason of that which the apostle speaks concerning them: "Until this day, the same vail in the reading of the Old Testament remaineth untaken away." That vail which was on the face of Moses, was an emblem of all this great mystery: and this vail was upon the face of the Jews in their reading the Old Testament; they dwelling so much in a carnal converse with these sacramental symbols which were offered to them in the reading of the law, that they could not see through them into the thing signified thereby, and so embraced shadows instead of substance, and made account to build up happiness and heaven upon that earthly law, to which properly the land of Canaan was annexed: whereas, indeed, this law should have been their "schoolmaster to have led them to Christ," whose law it prefigured; which that it might do the more effectually, God had annexed to the breach of any one part of it such severe curses, that they might from thence perceive how much need they had of some further dispensation. And, therefore, this state of theirs is set forth by a state or spirit of bondage. For all external precepts carry perpetually an aspect of austerity and rigour to those minds that are not informed by the internal sweetness of them. And this it is only which makes the Gospel, or the new Law, to be a free, noble, and generous thing, because it is seated in the souls of men: and therefore Aquinas, out of Austin, hath well observed another difference between the Law and the Gospel: "the concise difference between the Law

and the Gospel in fear and love." This I the rather observe, because the true meaning of that spirit of bondage, which the apostle speaks of, is frequently mistaken. We might further (if need were), for a confirmation of this which we have spoken, concerning the typicalness of the whole Jewish economy, appeal to the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians, which cannot well be understood without this notion, where we have the Jewish church, as a type of the true evangelical church, brought in as a child in its minority, in servitude, under tutors and governors, shut up under the Law, till the time of that emphatical revelation of the great mystery of God should come, till the day should break, and all the shadows of the night fly away.

6.—Of the Nature of the Gospel and of the End for which it was brought in.

THE Gospel was not brought in only to hold forth a new platform and model of religion: it was not brought in only to refine some notions of truth, that might formerly seem discoloured and disfigured by a multitude of legal rites and ceremonies; it was not to cast our opinions concerning the way of life and happiness only into a new mould and shape, in a pedagogical kind of way: it is not so much a system and body of saving divinity, as the spirit and vital influx of it spreading itself over all the powers of men's souls, and quickening them

into a divine life: it is not so properly a doctrine that is wrapt up in ink and paper, as it is *vitalis scientia*, a living impression made upon the soul and spirit. We may, in a true sense, be as legal as ever the Jews were, if we converse with the Gospel as a thing only without us; and be as far short of the righteousness of God as they were, if we make the righteousness which is of Christ by faith to serve us only as an outward covering, and endeavour not after an internal transformation of our minds and souls into it. The gospel does not so much consist *in verbis* as *in virtue:* neither doth evangelical dispensation therefore please God so much more than the legal did, because, as a finer contrivance of His infinite understanding, it more clearly discovers the way of salvation to the minds of men; but chiefly, because it is a more powerful efflux of His divine goodness upon them, as being the true seed of a happy immortality continually thriving and growing on to perfection. I shall add further, the Gospel does not therefore hold forth such a transcendent privilege and advantage above what the law did, only because it acquaints us that Christ our true High Priest is ascended up into the holy of holies, and there, instead of the blood of bulls and goats, hath sprinkled the ark and mercy-seat above with His own blood: but also because it conveys that blood of sprinkling into our defiled consciences, to purge them from dead works. Far be it from me to disparage, in the least, the merit of Christ's blood, His becoming obedient

unto death, whereby we are justified. But I doubt, sometimes, some of our dogmata and notions about justification may puff us up in far higher and goodlier conceits of ourselves than God hath of us; and that we profanely make the unspotted righteousness of Christ to serve only as a covering, wherein to wrap up our foul deformities and filthy vices; and when we have done, think ourselves in as good credit and repute with God as we are with ourselves, and that we are become heaven's darlings as much as we are our own. I doubt not but the merit and obedience of our Saviour gain us favour with God, and potently move down the benign influences of heaven upon us: but yet, I think, we may sometimes be too lavish and wanton in our imaginations, in fondly conceiving a greater change in the esteem which God hath of us than becomes us, and too little reckon upon the real and vital emanations of His favour upon us.

7.—*Of Acceptance with God.*

THE Divine judgment and estimation of every thing is according to the truth of the thing; and God's acceptance or disacceptance of things is suitable and proportionable to His judgment. Thus St. Peter plainly tells us, "God is no respecter of persons; but every one that worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." And God Himself posed Cain, who had entertained those unworthy and ungrounded suspicions of His partiality, with that

question, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Wheresoever God finds any stamps and impressions of goodness, He likes and approves them, knowing them well to be what they indeed are, nothing else but His own image and superscription. Wherever He sees His own image shining in the souls of men, and a conformity of life to that eternal idea of goodness which is Himself, He loves it and takes a complacency in it, as that which is from Himself, and is a true imitation of Himself. And as His own unbounded being and goodness is the primary and original object of His immense and Almighty love; so also every thing that partakes of Him, partakes proportionably of His love; all imitations of Him, and participations of His love and goodness, are perpetually adequate and commensurate the one to the other. By how much the more any one comes to resemble God, by so much the more is he acceptable to Him. It was a common notion in the old Pythagorean and Platonic theology, that the Divinity, transformed into love, and enamoured with its own unlimited perfections and spotless beauty, delighted to copy forth and shadow out itself, as it were, in created beings, which are perpetually embraced in the warm bosom of the same love, from which they can never swerve nor apostatize, till they also prove apostate to the estate of their creation. And, certainly, it is true in our Christian divinity, that that Divine light and goodness which flows forth from God, the Original of all, upon the souls of men, never goes solitary and

destitute of love, complacency, and acceptation, which are always lodged together with it in the Divine essence. And as the Divine complacency thus dearly and tenderly entertains all those which bear a similitude of true goodness upon them; so it always abandons from its embraces all evil, which never doth nor can mix itself with it: the Holy Spirit can never suffer any unhallowed or defiled thing to enter into it, or to unite itself with it. Therefore, in a sober sense, I hope I may truly say, there is no perfect and thorough reconciliation wrought between God and the souls of men, while any defiled and impure thing dwells within the soul, which cannot truly close with God, nor God with that. The Divine love, according to those degrees by which it works upon the souls of men, in transforming them into its own likeness, by the same renders them more acceptable to itself, mingleth itself with, and uniteth itself to, them: as the spirit of any thing mixeth itself more or less with any matter it acts upon, according as it works itself into it, and so makes a way and passage open for itself.

Upon this account, I suppose, it may be, that St. James attributes a kind of justification to good works, which unquestionably are things that God approves and accepts, and all those in whom He finds them, as seeing there a true conformity to His own goodness and holiness. Whereas, on the other side, he disparageth that barren, sluggish, and drowsy belief, that a lazy lethargy in religion began in his times so much to cherish,

in reference to acceptation with God. I suppose I may fairly thus gloss upon his whole discourse upon this argument: God respects not a bold, confident, and audacious faith, that is big with nothing but its own presumptions. It is not because our brains swim with a strong conceit of God's eternal love to us, or because we grow big and swell into a mighty bulk with airy fancies and presumptions of our acceptance with God, that makes us at all the more acceptable to Him: it is not all our strong dreams of being in favour with heaven that fills our hungry souls at all the more with it: it is not a pertinacious imagination of our names being enrolled in the book of life, or of the debt-books of heaven being crossed, or of Christ being ours, while we find Him not living within us, or of the washing away of our sins in His blood, while the foul and filthy stains thereof are deeply sunk in our own souls; it is not, I say, a pertinacious imagination of any of these that can make us the better: and a mere conceit or opinion, as it makes us never the better in reality within ourselves, so it cannot render us the more acceptable to God, who judges of all things as they are. No: it must be a true compliance with the Divine will, which must render us such as the Divinity may take pleasure in. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing," nor any fancy built upon any other external privilege, "but the keeping of the commandments of God." No: but "if any man does the will of God, him will both the Father

and the Son love; they will come in to him, and make their abode with him." This is the scope and mark at which a true, heaven-born faith aims; and when it hath attained this end, then is it indeed perfect and complete in its last accomplishment. And by how much the more ardency and intention faith levels at this mark of inward goodness and divine activity, by so much the more perfect and sincere it is. This is that which God justifies, it being just and correspondent with His own good pleasure: and in whomsoever He finds this, both it and they are accepted of Him.

8.—Of the Justification of Sinners.

GOD'S justifying of sinners, in pardoning and remitting their sins, carries in it a necessary reference to the sanctifying of their natures; without which, justification would rather be a glorious name than a real privilege to the souls of men. While men continue in their wickedness, they do but vainly dream of a device to restrain the hands of an Almighty vengeance from seizing on them: no—their own sins, like so many armed giants, would first or last set upon them, and rend them with inward torment. There needs no angry cherub, with a flaming sword drawn out every way, to keep their unhallowed hands from the tree of life: no—their own prodigious lusts, like so many arrows in their sides, would chase them; their own hellish natures would sink

them low enough into eternal death, and chain them up fast enough in fetters of darkness among the filthy fiends of hell. Sin will always be miserable; and the sinner, at last, when the empty bladders of all those hopes and expectations of an airy, mundane happiness, that did here bear him up in this life, shall be cut, will find it like a talent of lead weighing him down into the bottomless gulf of misery. If all were clear towards heaven, we should find sin raising up storms in our souls. We cannot carry fire in our own bosoms, and yet not be burnt. Though we could suppose the greatest serenity without us, though we could suppose ourselves here so much to be at truce with heaven, and all Divine displeasure laid asleep, yet would our own sins, if they continue unmortified, first or last, make an Ætna or Vesuvius within us. Nay; those sunbeams of eternal truth, that by us are detained in unrighteousness, would, at last, in those hellish vaults of vice and darkness that are within us, kindle into an unquenchable fire. It would be of small benefit to us, that Christ hath triumphed over the principalities and powers of darkness *without* us, while hell and death, strongly immured in a fort of our own sins and corruptions, should tyrannize *within* us; that His blood should speak peace in heaven, if, in the mean while, our own lusts were perpetually warring and fighting in and against our own souls; that He hath taken off our guilt and cancelled that handwriting that was against us, which bound us over to eternal condem-

nation; if, for all this, we continue fast sealed up in the hellish dungeon of our own filthy lusts. Indeed, we could not expect any relief from heaven, out of that misery under which we lie, were not God's displeasure against us first pacified, and our sins remitted: but, should the Divine clemency stoop no lower to us than to a mere pardon of our sins, and an abstract justification, we should never rise out of that misery under which we lie. This is the signal and transcendent benefit of our free justification through the blood of Christ, that God's offence justly conceived against us for our sins (which would have been an eternal bar and restraint to the efflux of His grace upon us) being removed, the Divine grace and bounty may freely flow forth upon us. The fountain of the Divine grace and love is now unlocked and opened, which our sins had shut up; and now, the streams of holiness and true goodness from thence freely flow forth into all gasping souls that thirst after them. The warm sun of the Divine love, whenever it breaks through and scatters the thick cloud of our iniquities that had formerly separated between God and us, immediately breaks forth upon us with "healing in its wings;" it exerciseth the mighty force of its own light and heat upon our dark and benumbed souls, begetting in them a lively sense of God, and kindling into sparks of Divine goodness within us. This love, when once it hath chased away the thick mist of our sins, will be "as strong as death upon us, as potent as the grave: many waters

will not quench it, nor the floods drown it." If we shut not the windows of our souls against it, it will at last enlighten all those regions of darkness that are within us, and lead our souls to the light of life, blessedness, and immortality. God pardons men's sins, out of an eternal design of destroying them; and whenever the sentence of death is taken off from a sinner, it is, at the same time, denounced against his sins. God does not bid us be warmed and be filled, and deny us those necessaries which our starving and hungry souls call for. Christ having made peace through the blood of His cross, the heavens shall be no more as iron above us; but we shall receive freely the vital dew of them, the former and the latter rain in their season—those influences from above, after which souls, truly sensible of their own misery and imperfection, incessantly gasp; that righteousness of God which drops from above, from the unsealed spring of free goodness which makes glad the city of God. This is that free love and grace, in which the souls of good men so much triumph; this is that justification which begets in them lively hopes of a happy immortality, in the present anticipations thereof which spring forth from it in this life. And all this is that which we have sometimes called "the righteousness of Christ;" sometimes, "the righteousness of God;" and here, "the righteousness which is of faith." In heaven, it is a not imputing of sin; in the souls of men, it is a reconciliation of rebellious natures to truth and goodness. In heaven,

it is the lifting up the light of God's countenance upon us, which begets a gladsome entertainment in the souls of men, holy and dear reflections and reciprocations of love: Divine love to us, as it were, by a natural emanation, begetting a reflex love in us towards God, which, like that *eros* and *anteros* spoken of by the ancients, live and thrive together.

9.—*Of Faith.*

THIS is that powerful attractive which, by a strong and divine sympathy, draws down the virtue of heaven into the souls of men; which strongly and forcibly moves the souls of good men into a conjunction with that Divine goodness by which it lives and grows: this is that Divine impress that invincibly draws and sucks them in, by degrees, into the Divinity, and so unites them more and more to the Centre of life and love: it is something in the hearts of men which, feeling, by an occult and inward sensation, the mighty insinuations of the Divine goodness, immediately complies with it, and, with the greatest ardency that may be, is perpetually rising up into conjunction with it; and, being first begotten and enlivened by the warm beams of that goodness, always breathes and gasps after it for its constant growth and nourishment. It is then fullest of life and vivacity, when it partakes most freely of it; and perpetually languisheth when it is in any measure deprived of that sweet and pure nourishment it derives from it.

10.—Of the Communication of Gospel-righteousness.

THAT we may the more clearly unfold how gospel-righteousness comes to be communicated through faith, we shall set it forth in two particulars.

First, *The Gospel lays a strong foundation of a cheerful dependence upon the grace and love of God, and affiance in it.* We have the greatest security and assurance that may be given us, of God's readiness to relieve such forlorn and desolate creatures as we are: that there are no such dreadful fates in heaven, as are continually thirsting after the blood of sinners, insatiably greedy after their prey, never satisfied till they have devoured the souls of men. Lest we should, by such dreadful apprehensions, be driven from God, we are told of the "blood of sprinkling that speaks better things" for us; of a mighty Favourite soliciting our cause, with perpetual intercessions, in the court of heaven; of "a new and living way" to the throne of grace, and to the holy of holies which our Saviour hath "consecrated through His flesh;" we are told of a great and mighty Saviour, "able to save to the utmost" all that come to God by Him: we hear of the most compassionate and tender promises that may be, from the Truth itself, that "whosoever comes to Him He will in wise cast out;" that "They that believe on Him, out of them should flow streams of living water:" we hear of the most gracious invitations that heaven can make, to all "weary and heavy laden" sinners to come

to Christ, that they may find rest: the great secrets of heaven, and the arcana of Divine counsels, are revealed, whereby we are acquainted that "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men," are sweetly joined together in heaven's harmony, and happily combined together in the composure of its ditties; that the glory of the Deity, and salvation of men, are not allayed by their union one with another, but both exalted together in the most transcendent way; that Divine love and bounty are the supreme rulers in heaven and earth; that there is no such thing as sour despite and envy lodged in the bosom of that ever blessed Being above, whose name is LOVE, and all whose dispensations to the sons of men are but the dispreadings and distended radiations of His Love, as freely flowing forth from it, through the whole orb or sphere of its creation, as the bright light from the sun in the firmament, of whose benign influences we are then only deprived, when we hide and withdraw ourselves from them. We are taught that the mild and gentle breathings of the Divine Spirit are moving up and down in the world to produce life, and to revive and quicken the souls of men into a feeling sense of a blessed immortality. This is that mighty Spirit that will, if we comply with it, "teach us all things," even the hidden things of God; mortify all the lusts of rebellious flesh, and "seal us to the day of redemption." We are taught that, with all holy boldness, we may "in all places lift up holy hands to God, without wrath or doubting," with-

out any sour thoughts of God, or fretful jealousies, or harsh surmises. We can never distrust ourselves enough, nor ever trust too much in God. This is the great plerophory, and that full confidence, which the Gospel everywhere seems to promote: and, should I run through all the arguments and solicitations that are there laid down, to provoke us to an entertainment hereof, I should then run quite through it from one end to another: it containing almost nothing else in the whole complex and body of it, but strong and forcible motives to all ingenuous addresses to God, and the most effectual encouragement that may be, to all cheerful dependence on Him, and confident expectation of all assistance from Him, to carry on our poor endeavours to the achievement of blessedness, and that in the most plain and simple way that may be, *sine fraude et fuco*—without any double mind or mental reservation: heaven is not acquainted so feelingly with our wicked arts and devices. But it is very strange that, where God writes life so plainly in fair, capital letters, we are so often apt to read death; that when He tells us over and over, that hell and destruction arise from ourselves, that they are the workmanship of our own hands, we will needs understand their pedigree to be from heaven, and that they were conceived in the womb of life and blessedness. No: but the Gospel tells us we are not come to "mounts of burning," nor unto "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," &c. Certainly, a lively faith in this love of God, and a sober converse

with His goodness, by a cordial entertainment and thorough persuasion of it, would warm and chafe our benumbed minds, and thaw our hearts, frozen with self-love; it would make us melt and dissolve out of all self-consistency, and, by a free and noble sympathy with the Divine love, yield up ourselves to it, and dilate and spread ourselves more fully in it. This would banish away all atheism and ireful, slavish superstition: it would cast down every high thought, and proud imagination, that swells within us and exalts itself against this sovereign Deity: it would free us from all those poor, sorry, pinching, and particular loves that here inthral the souls of men to vanity and baseness: it would lead us into the true liberty of the sons of God, filling our hearts, once enlarged with the sense of it, with a more generous and universal love, as unlimited and unbounded as true goodness itself is. Thus, Moses-like, conversing with God in the mount, and there beholding His glory shining thus out upon us in the face of Christ, we should be deriving a copy of that eternal beauty upon our own souls, and our thirsty and hungry spirits would be perpetually sucking in a true participation and image of His glory. A true Divine love would wing our souls, and make them take their flight swiftly towards heaven and immortality. Could we once be thoroughly possessed and constrained with a full confidence of the Divine love, and God's readiness to assist such feeble, languishing, creatures as we are, in our essays after heaven and blessedness, we

should then, finding ourselves borne up by an Eternal and Almighty strength, dare to adventure, courageously and confidently, upon the highest designs of happiness; to assail the kingdom of heaven with a holy gallantry and violence; to pursue a course of well-doing without weariness; knowing that our labour should not be in vain in the Lord, and that we should receive our reward, if we faint not: we should work out our salvation in the most industrious manner, trusting in God, as one ready to instil strength and power into all the vital faculties of our souls: we should "press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that we might apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus." If we suffer not ourselves to be robbed of this confidence and hope in God, as ready to accomplish the desires of those that seek after Him, we may then walk on strongly in the way to heaven, and not be weary; we may run, and not faint.

Secondly. *A true, gospel, faith is no lazy or languid thing, but a strong, ardent, breathing for, and thirsting after, Divine grace and righteousness:* it doth not only pursue an ambitious project of raising the soul immaturely to the condition of a darling favourite with heaven, while it is unripe for it, by procuring a mere, empty, pardon of sin: it desires, not only to stand upon clear terms with heaven, by procuring the crossing of all the debt-books of our sins there; but it rather pursues after an internal participation of the Divine nature. We often hear of a

saving faith; and that, where it is, is not content to wait for salvation till the world to come: it is not patient of being an expectant in a probationership for it, until this earthly body resigns up all its worldly interest, that so the soul may then come into its room: no: but it is here perpetually gasping after it, and effecting it in a way of serious mortification and self-denial: it enlarges and dilates itself, as much as may be, according to the vast dimensions of the Divine love, that it may comprehend "the height and depth, the length and breadth" thereof, and fill the soul, where it is seated, "with all the fulness of God:" it breeds a strong and insatiable appetite, where it comes, after true goodness. Were I to describe it, I should do it no otherwise than in the language of the apostle: it is that whereby "we live in Christ," and whereby "He lives in us;" or, in the dialect of our Saviour Himself, something so powerfully sucking in the precious influences of the Divine Spirit, that the soul where it is, is continually flowing with living waters issuing out of itself. A truly believing soul, by an ingenuous affiance in God, and an eager thirst after Him, is always sucking from the full breasts of the Divine love: thence it will not part; for there, and there only, is its life and nourishment: it starves and faints away with grief and hunger, whensoever it is pulled away from thence: it is perpetually hanging upon the arms of immortal goodness, for there it finds its great strength lies; and, as much as may be, arms itself with the mighty power of God, by

which it goes forth, like a giant refreshed with wine, to run that race of grace and holiness that leads to the true Elysium of glory, and that heavenly Canaan which is above. And whensoever it finds itself enfeebled in its difficult conflict with those fierce and furious corruptions, those tall sons of Anak, which, arising from our terrene and sensual affections, do here encounter it in the wilderness of this world; then, turning itself to God, and putting itself under the conduct of the Angel of His presence, it finds itself presently out of weakness to become strong, enabled from above to put to flight those mighty armies of the aliens. True faith (if you would know its rise and pedigree) is begotten of the Divine bounty and fulness manifesting itself to the spirits of men, and it is conceived and brought forth by a deep and humble sense of self-indigency and poverty. Faith arises out of self-examination, seating and placing itself in view of the Divine plenitude and all-sufficiency; and thus (that I may borrow those words of St. Paul) "we received the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in Him." The more this sensual, brutish, and self-central life thrives and prospers, the more Divine faith languisheth; and the more that decays, and all self-feeling, self-love, and self-sufficiency pine away, the more is true faith fed and nourished, the more vigorous it grows: and as carnal life wastes and consumes, so the more does faith suck in a true, divine, and spiritual life from the true Self-existing Being who hath life in Him-

self, and freely bestows it to all those that heartily seek for it. When the Divinity united Himself to human nature in the person of our Saviour, He then gave mankind a pledge and earnest of what He would further do therein, in assuming it into as near a conjunction as might be with Himself, and in dispensing and communicating Himself to man, in a way as far correspondent and agreeable as might be to that first copy. And, therefore, we are told of "Christ being formed in us," and "the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us; of our being made conformable to Him, of having fellowship with Him, of being as He was in this world, of living in Him and His living in us, of dying, and rising again, and ascending with Him into heaven," and the like: because, indeed, the same Spirit that dwelt in Him, extends itself, in its mighty virtue and energy, through all believing souls, shaping them more and more into a just resemblance and conformity to Him as the first copy and pattern: whence it is that we have so many ways of unfolding the union between Christ and all believers, set forth in the Gospel. And all this is done for us by degrees, through the efficacy of the Eternal Spirit, when, by a true faith, we deny ourselves and our own wills, submit ourselves in a deep sense of our own folly and weakness to His wisdom and power, comply with His will, and, by a holy affiance in Him, subordinate ourselves to His pleasure: for these are the vital acts of a gospel faith.

And according to this which hath been said, I suppose

we may fairly gloss upon St. Paul's discourses which so much prefer faith above works. We must not think, in a giant-like pride, to scale the walls of heaven by our own works, and by force thereof to take the strong fort of blessedness, and wrest the crown of glory out of God's hands whether He will or no. We must not think to commence a suit in heaven for happiness, upon such a poor and weak plea as our own external compliance with the old law is. We must not think to deal with God in the method of commutative justice, and to challenge eternal life as the just reward of our great merits, and the hire due to us for the labour and toil we have taken in God's vineyard. No: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble:" it must be a humble and self-denying address of a soul, dissolved into a deep and piercing sense of its own nothingness and unprofitableness, that can be capable of the Divine bounty: "He fills the hungry with good things, but the rich He sends empty away." They are the hungry and thirsty souls, always gasping after the living springs of Divine grace, as the parched ground in the desert doth for the dew of heaven, ready to drink them in by a constant dependence upon God; souls that, by a living, watchful, and diligent faith, spreading forth themselves in all obsequious reverence and love of Him, wait upon Him "as the eyes of a handmaid wait on the hand of her mistress:" these are they that He delights to satiate with His goodness. Those that being mastered by a strong sense of their own

indigency, their pinching and pressing poverty, and His all-sufficient fulness, trust in Him as an Almighty Saviour, and in the most ardent manner pursue after that perfection to which His grace is leading them; those that cannot satisfy themselves in a bare performance of some external acts of righteousness, or an external observance of a law without them, but, with the most greedy and fervent ambition, pursue after such an acquaintance with His Divine Spirit as may breathe an inward life through all the powers of their souls, and beget in them a vital form and soul of divine goodness;—these are the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham, the sons of the free-woman and heirs of the promises, to whom all are made "Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." These are they which shall abide in the house for ever, when the sons of the bond-woman, those that are only Arabian proselytes, shall be cast out.

11.—Of the Undertaking of Christ.

IN the general, we may consider, That full and evident assurance is given hereby to the world, that God doth indeed "seek the saving of that which is lost;" and men are no longer to make any doubt or scruple of it. Now what can we imagine more available to carry on a design of godliness, and to rouse dull and languid souls to an effectual minding of their own salvation, than to have this news sounding in their ears by

men, that, at the first promulgation thereof, durst tell them roundly in the name of God, that God required them everywhere to repent, for that His kingdom of grace was now apparent; and that He was not only willing, but it was His gracious design to save and recover lost sinners who had forsaken His goodness?

Particularly, that the whole business of Christ is very advantageous for this purpose, and highly accommodate thereto, may appear thus:

1. We are fully assured that God hath this fore-mentioned design upon lost men, because here is one (viz. Christ) that partakes every way of human nature; in whom the Divinity magnifies itself, and whom it carries through this world, in human infirmities and sufferings, to eternal glory: a clear manifestation to the world, that God had not cast off human nature, but had a real mind to exalt and dignify it again.

2. The way into the holy of holies, or to eternal happiness, is laid as open as may be by Christ, in His doctrine, life, and death: in all which we may see, with open face, what human nature may attain to, and how it may, by humility, self-denial, divine love, and a Christ-like life, rise above all visible heavens into a state of immortal glory and bliss.

3. Here is a manifestation of love given, enough to thaw all the iciness of men's hearts which self-love had quite frozen up: for here is One who, in human nature most heartily everywhere denying Himself, is ready to do

anything for the good of mankind, and, at last, gives up His life for the same purpose; and that according to the good will and pleasure of that eternal love which "so loved the world, that He gave" this beloved and "His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

4. Whereas every penitent sinner carries a sense of guilt upon his own conscience, is apt to shrink with cold, chill, fears of offended majesty, and to dread the thoughts of violated justice; he is assured that Christ hath laid down His life, and thereby made propitiation and atonement for sin; that He hath laid down His life for the redemption of him; and so in Christ "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus may the hearts of all penitents, troubled, at first, with a sense of their own guilt, be quieted, and fully established in a living faith and hope in an eternal goodness; seeing how their sins are remitted through the blood of Jesus, who came to die for them and save them, and through His blood they may have free access unto God.

5. Seeing sin and guilt are apt continually to beget a jealousy of God's majesty and greatness, from whom the sinner finds himself at a vast distance, he is made acquainted with a Mediator, through whom he may address himself to God, without this jealousy or doubting; for that this Mediator, likewise, is one of human nature, that is highly beloved and accepted of God, He having so highly pleased God by performing His will in all things.

Certainly it is very decorous, and much for the ease of a penitent's mind, (as it makes also for the disparagement of sin) that our addresses to God should be through a mediator. The Platonists wisely observed that, between the pure Divinity and impure sinners, as there is no union, so no communion: it is very agreeable, every way and upon all accounts, that they who, in themselves, are altogether unworthy and under demerit, should come to God by a Mediator.

Thus the Scripture everywhere seems to represent and hold forth Christ in the forenamed particulars, (without descending into niceties and subtilties, such as the schoolmen and others from them have troubled the world with, in a very full and ample manner), that so the minds of true believers, that are willing to comply with the purpose of God for their own eternal peace, might, in all cases, find something in Christ for their relief, and make use of Him, as much as may be, to encourage and help on godliness: for, by this whole undertaking of Christ manifested in the gospel, God would have to be understood full relief of mind and ease of conscience, as also all encouragement to godliness, and disparagement of sin. And, indeed, the whole business of Christ is the greatest blow to sin that may be; for the world is taught hereby, that there is no sinning upon cheap and easy terms: men may see that God will not return so easily into favour with sinners; but He will have His righteousness acknowledged, and likewise their own demerit. And this acknowledgement

He is once, indeed, pleased to accept of in the person of our Saviour: yet, if men will not now turn to Him, and accept His favour, they must know that there is no other sacrifice for sin.

By these particulars, upon which we have briefly touched, to name no more, it may appear, that when we look into the Gospel, we are taught to believe that Christ hath done, according to the good pleasure of God, everything for us that may truly relieve our minds, and encourage us to godliness—a godlike righteousness far exceeding the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

A DISCOVERY

OF THE

SHORTNESS AND VANITY

OF A

Pharisaical Righteousness;

OR,

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FALSE GROUNDS UPON WHICH MEN ARE APT VAINLY TO CONCEIVE THEMSELVES TO BE RIGHTEOUS.

THE

SHORTNESS AND VANITY

OF A

PHARISAICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

DISCOVERED IN A DISCOURSE UPON

MATT. XIX. 20, 21.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus saith unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me.

CHAPTER I.

A general account of men's mistakes about religion. Men are nowhere more lazy and sluggish, and more apt to delude themselves, than in matters of religion. The religion of most men is but an image and resemblance of their own fancies. The method propounded for discoursing upon those words in St. Matthew. 1. To discover some of the false mistakes and notions about religion. 2. To discover the reason of these mistakes. A brief explication of the words.

AS there is no kind of excellency more generally pretended to than religion, so there is none less known or wherein men are more apt to delude themselves.

Every one is ready to lay claim, and to plead a right in it; like the bat in the Jewish fable, that pretended the light was hers, and complained of the unjust detainment thereof from her; but few there are that understand the true worth and preciousness of it. There are some common notions, and a natural instinct of devotion, seated in the minds of men, which are ever and anon roving after religion; and, as they casually and fortuitously start up any models and ideas of it, they are presently prone to believe themselves to have found out this only pearl of price; the religion of most men being, indeed, nothing else but such a strain and scheme of thoughts and actions, as their natural propensions, swayed by nothing else but an inbred belief of a Deity, accidentally run into; nothing else but an image and resemblance of their own fancies, which are ever busy in painting out themselves; which is the reason why there are as many shapes and features of religion painted forth in the minds of men, as there are various shapes of faces and fancies. Thus men are wont to fashion and delineate their religion to themselves in a strange and uncouth manner, as the imaginations of men in their dreams are wont to represent monstrous and hideous shapes of things, that appear nowhere else but there. And though some may seem to themselves to have ascended up above this low region, this vulgar state of religion; yet I doubt they may still be wrapped up in clouds and darkness, they may still be but in a middle region, like wandering

meteors that have not yet shaken off that gross and earthly nature, which will, at last, force them again downwards. There may be some who may arrive at that book-skill and learning in Divine mysteries, that, with a Pharisaical pride looking down upon the rude and vulgar sort of men, may say, "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed;" who themselves yet converse only with an airy ghost and shadow of religion: though the light of Divine truth may seem to shine *upon* them, yet, by reason of their dark and opacous hearts, it shines not *into* them: they may, like this dark and dull earth, be superficially gilded, and warmed too, with its beams, and yet the impressions thereof not pierce quite through them. There may be many fair semblances of religion where the substance and power of it is not. We shall here endeavour to discover some of them which may seem most specious, and with which the weak understandings of men, which are nowhere more lazy and sluggish than in matters of religion, are most apt to be deluded; and then discover the reason of these mistakes.

For this purpose we have made choice of these words, wherein we find a young Pharisee beginning to swell with a vain conceit of his good estate towards God, looking upon himself as being already upon the borders of perfection, having, from his youth up, kept on a constant course in the way of God's commandments: he could not now be many miles from the land of Canaan, if he were not already passed over Jordan: he thought himself

to be already in a state of perfection, or, at least, within sight of it; and, therefore, making account he was as lovely in our Saviour's eyes as he was in his own, asks Him, "What lack I yet?"

For the understanding of this, we must know the Jews were wont to distinguish righteous men into two sorts, "righteous" and "perfectly righteous"* to which this query of his seems to refer; as if he had said, Having kept all God's commandments, sure my good deeds cannot only over-balance my evil, no—but they rather fill both the scales of the Divine balance; I have no evil deeds to weigh against them: what, therefore, can I want of the end and scope of the Divine law, which is to make men perfect, seeing I have guided my whole life from my youth up by the precepts of it? To which our Saviour replies; "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me." These words I

* The Jewish doctors are wont to distinguish between three sorts of men, which are thus ranked by them: "men perfectly righteous," "men perfectly wicked," and "a middle sort of men betwixt them." Those they are wont to call "perfectly righteous," who had no transgression or demerits that might be counted fit to be put into the balance against their merits; and those they called simply "righteous," whose merits out-weighed their demerits; whereas, on the other side, the "perfectly wicked" in their sense were such as had no merits at all; and those simply "wicked," whose demerits made the weightiest scale; and the "middle sort" were such as their good deeds and evil deeds equally balanced one another.—*Select Discourses*, 315.

can neither think to be spoken as *consilium perfectionis* in the papal sense, nor yet only as a particular and special precept; but rather by way of conviction: so that the full sense and importance of our Saviour's speech seems to be this, *viz.*, A mere conformity of the outward man to the law of God is not sufficient to bring a man to eternal life; but the inward man also must deeply receive the stamp and impression of the Divine law, so as to be made like to God. True perfection is not consistent with any terrene loves or worldly affections: this mundane life and spirit which acts so strongly and impetuously in this lower world, must be crucified: the soul must be wholly dissolved from this earthy body in which it is so deeply immersed, while it endeavours to enlarge its sorry tabernacle upon this material globe, and by a holy abstraction from all things that pinion it to mortality, withdraw itself and retire into a divine solitude. If thou, therefore, wert in a state of perfection, thou wouldest be able, at the first call from God, to resign up all interest here below; to quit all claim, and to dispose of thyself and all worldly enjoyments, according to his pleasure, without any reluctancy; "and come and follow Me." And this, I think, was the true scope of our Saviour's answer; which proved a real demonstration, as it appears in the sequel of the story, that this confident Pharisee had not yet attained to those mortified affections, which are requisite in all the candidates for true blessedness; but only cheated his own soul with a bare external

appearance of religion, which was not truly seated in his heart: and I doubt not but many are ready upon as slight grounds, and with as much confidence, to take up his query, "What lack I yet?"

We shall, therefore, in the first place, according to what we promised, inquire into some of those false pretences which men are apt to make to happiness, and show, in four particulars, how religion is mistaken.

CHAPTER II.

An account of men's mistakes about religion in four particulars. 1. A partial obedience to some particular precepts. The false spirit of religion spends itself in some particulars, is confined, is overswayed by some prevailing lust. Men of this spirit may, by some book-skill, and a zeal about the externals of religion, lose the sense of their own guiltiness, and of their deficiencies in the essentials of godliness, and fancy themselves nearly related to God. Where the true spirit of religion is, it informs and actuates the whole man; it will not be confined, but will be absolute within us, and not suffer any corrupt interest to grow by it.

THE *first* is, *Of a partial obedience to some particular precepts of God's law.* That arrogant Pharisee who could lift up a bold face to heaven, and thank God he was no extortioner, nor unjust, nor guilty of any publican sins, found it easy to persuade himself that God justified him, as much as he did himself.

It was a vulgar rule given by the Jewish doctors, which I fear too many live by, "That men should single out some one commandment out of God's law, and therein especially exercise themselves, that so they might make God their friend by that, lest in others they should too much displease Him." Thus men are content to pay God their *decimæ*, and *septimæ* too of their lives, if need be, so that they may, without fear of sacrilege, or purloining, as they suppose, from Him, enjoy all the rest to themselves; but they are not willing to consecrate their whole lives to Him: they are afraid lest religion should encroach too much upon them, and too busily invade their own rights and liberties, as their selfish spirit calls them.

There are such as, perhaps, think themselves willing that God should have His due, providing that He also let them enjoy their own without any let or molestation; but they are very jealous lest He should encroach too much upon them, and are careful to maintain a *meum* and *tuum* with heaven itself, and to set bounds to God's prerogative over them, lest it should swell too much, and grow too mighty for them to maintain their own privileges under it. They would fain understand themselves to be free-born under the dominion of God Himself, and, therefore, ought not to be compelled to yield obedience to any such laws of His as their own private, seditious lusts and passions will not suffer them to give their consent unto.

There are such as persuade themselves they are well affected to God, and willing to obey his commandments, but yet think they must not be uncivil to the world; or so base and cowardly as not to maintain their own credit and reputation, with a due revenge upon those that seem to impair it; or so much forget themselves, as not to comply with the guise and fashion of this world, so far as it may make for their own emolument or preferment. Such as these, that are no fast friends to religion, can easily find some postern door to slip out by into this world; and while they either do some constant homage to heaven, in the exercise and performance of some duties of religion, or abstain from such vices as the common opinions of men brand with infamy, or can fancy themselves to be marked out with some of those characters which they have learned, from books or pulpit discourses, to be the notes of God's children and justified persons, they grow big with self-conceit, and can easily find out some handsome piece of sophistry and cunning topic to delude themselves by, in indulging some beloved lust or other: they can sometimes beat down the price of other men's religion, to enhance the value of their own; or, it may be, by a burning and fiery zeal against the opinions and deportments of others that are not of their own sect, they may lose the sense of all their own guiltiness. The disciples themselves had almost forgotten the mild and gentle spirit of religion, when, in an overhasty heat, they

called for fire down from heaven upon those whom they deemed their Master's enemies.

Sometimes, a partial spirit in religion, that spends itself only in some particulars, mistakes the fair complexions of good nature for the true face of virtue; and a good bodily temperament will serve it, as a flattering glass, to bestow beauty upon a deformed and misshapen mind, that it may seem virtuous. But it is not a true spirit of religion, whatsoever those wanton wits may call it, that is thus particular and confined. No: that is of a subtile and working nature; it will be searching through the whole man, and leave nothing uninformed by itself; as it is with the soul that runs through all the portions of matter, and every member of the body. Sin and grace cannot lodge together; they cannot divide, and share out between them, two several dominions in one soul.

What is commonly said of truth in general, we may say more especially of true goodness—it is great, and will prevail: it will lodge in the souls of men like that mighty, though gentle, heat which is entertained in the heart, that always dispenseth warm blood and spirits to all the members in the body; it will not suffer any other interest to grow by it; it will be so absolute as to swallow up all our carnal freedom, and crush down all our fleshly liberty; as Aaron's serpent did eat up all the serpents of the Egyptian magicians, so will it devour all that viperous brood of iniquity, which our magical self-will, by her witchcraft and enchantments, begets within us: like a

strong and vehement flame within us, it will not only singe the hair, or scorch and blister the skin, but it will go on to consume this whole body of death : it is compared, by our Saviour, to leaven that will ferment the whole mass in which it is wrapped up ; it will enter into us like the refiner's fire, and the fuller's soap ; like the Angel of God's presence that He promised to send along with the Israelites in their journey to Canaan, it will not pardon our iniquities, nor indulge any darling lust whatsoever : it will narrowly pry into all our actions, and be spying out all those back ways and doors whereby sin and vice may enter.

That religion that runs out only in particularities, and is overswayed by the prevailing power of any lust, is only a dead carcase, and not, indeed, that true, living religion which comes from heaven, and which will not suffer itself to be confined ; that will not indent with us, or article upon our terms and conditions, but, Samson-like, will break all those bonds, with which our fleshly and harlot-like wills would tie it, and become every way absolute within us. And so I pass to the second thing wherein men are apt to delude themselves in taking an estimate of their own religion.

CHAPTER III.

The second mistake about religion, viz. A mere compliance of the outward man with the law of God. True religion seats itself in the centre of men's souls, and first brings the inward man into obedience to the law of God: the superficial religion intermeddles chiefly with the circumference and outside of men; or rests in an outward abstaining from some sins. Of speculative, and the most close and spiritual, wickedness within. How apt men are to sink all religion into opinions and external forms.

2. *A MERE compliance of the outward man with the law of God.* There is an outward, and an inward man, that philosophy hath acknowledged, as well as our Christian divinity: and when religion seats itself in the centre of men's souls, it acts there most strongly upon the vital powers of it, and first brings the inward man into a true and cheerful obedience to the law of God, before all the seditious and rebellious motives of the external or animal man be quite subdued. But a superficial religion many times intermeddles only with the circumference and outside of men: it lodges only in the suburbs, and storms the outworks, but enters not the main fort of men's souls, which is strongly defended by inward pride, self-will, particular and mundane loves, fretting and self-consuming envy, popularity and vain-glory, and such other mental vices as, when they are beaten out of the visible behaviours and conversations of men by Divine threats or promises, which may be too potent to be controlled, retreat and secure themselves here, as in a strong castle.

There may be many who dare not pursue revenge, and yet are not willing to forgive injuries; who dare not murder their enemy, and yet cannot love him; who dare not seek for preferment by bribery, and yet are not mortified to these and many other mundane and base-born affections: they are not willing that the Divine prerogative should extend itself beyond the outward man, and that religion should be too busy with their inward thoughts and passions: if they may not, by proud boasting, set off their own sorry commodities upon the public stage, and there read out their own panegyrics, yet they will inwardly applaud themselves, and commit wanton dalliance with their own parts and perfections; and, not feeling the mighty power of any higher good, they will endeavour to preserve an unhallowed autæsthesy and feeling sense of themselves; and, by a sullen melancholy stoicism, when religion would deprive and bereave them of the sinful glory and pleasures of this outward world, they then retire, and shrink themselves up, into a centre of their own: they collect and contract themselves into themselves. Thus, when this low life of men's souls is chased out of the external vices and vanities of this world, by the chastisements of their own consciences, or many times by bodily oppressions, it presently retires into itself, and by a self-feeling begins more to grasp and dearly embrace itself. When these external loves begin to be starved and cooled, yet men may then fall into love with, and courting of, themselves by arrogancy, self-confidence

and dependence, self-applause and gratulations, admiration of their own perfections; and so feed that dying life of theirs with this speculative wantonness, that it may as strongly express itself within them, as before it did without themselves. Men may, by inward braving of themselves, sacrilegiously steal God's glory from Him, and erect a self-supremacy within, exerting itself in self-will and particular loves, and so become co-rivals with God for the crown of blessedness and self-sufficiency, as I doubt many of the Stoics endeavoured, with a giant-like ambition, to do.

But, alas! I doubt we generally arrive not to this pitch of religion, to deny the world, and all the pomp and glory of this largely extended train of vanity; but we easily content ourselves with some external forms of religion. We are too apt to look at a garish dress and attire of religion, or to be enamoured rather with some more specious and seemingly spiritual forms, than with the true spirit and power of godliness and religion itself. We are more taken commonly with the several new fashions that the luxuriant fancies of men are apt to contrive for it, than with the real power and simplicity thereof: and, while we think ourselves to be growing in our knowledge, and moving on towards a state of perfection, we do but turn up and down from one kind of form to another: we are as apt still to draw it down into as low, worldly, and mundane rites and ordinances, as ever it was before our Saviour made that glorious reformation therein, which

took away these material crutches made up of carnal observances, upon which earthly minds so much lean, and are fain to underprop their religion with, which else would tumble down and fall to nothing: except we can cast it into such a certain set of duties and system of opinions, that we may see it altogether from one end to another, we are afraid lest it should become too abstruse a thing, and vanish away from us.

I would not be misunderstood to speak against those duties and ordinances which are necessary means, appointed by God, to promote us in the ways of piety: but I fear we are too apt to sink all our religion into these, and so to embody it, that we may, as it were, touch and feel it, because we are so little acquainted with the high and spiritual nature of it, which is too subtile for gross and carnal minds to converse with. I fear our vulgar sort of Christians are wont so to look upon such kinds of models of divinity and religious performances, as were intended to help our dull minds to a more lively sense of God and true goodness, as those things that claim the whole of their religion: and, therefore, are too apt to think themselves absolved from it, except at some solemn times of more especial addresses to God; and that this wedding-garment of holy thoughts and divine affections is not for every day's wearing, but only then to be put on when we come to the marriage-feast and festivals of heaven: as if religion were fast locked and bound up in some sacred solemnities, and so incarcerated and incorporated

into some divine mysteries, as the superstitious heathen of old thought, that it might not stir abroad, and wander too far out of these hallowed cloisters, and grow too busy with us in our secular employments. We have learned to distinguish too subtilely, I doubt, in our lives and conversations *inter sacrum et profanum*—our religious approaches to God and our worldly affairs. I know our conversation and demeanour in this world neither is, nor can well be, all of a piece, and that there will be several degrees of sanctity in the lives of the best men, as there were once in the land of Canaan: but yet I think a good man should always find himself upon holy ground, and never depart so far into the affairs of this life, as to be without either the call or compass of religion: he should always think wheresoever he is, *etiam ibi Dii sunt*—that God and the blessed angels are there, with whom he should converse in a way of purity. We must not think that religion serves to paint our faces, to reform our looks, or only to inform our heads, or instruct and tune our tongues; no, nor only to tie our hands, and make our outward man more demure, and bring our bodies and bodily actions into a better decorum: but its main business is to purge and reform our hearts, and all the illicit actions and motions thereof. And so I come to a third particular wherein we are apt to misjudge ourselves in matters of religion.

CHAPTER IV.

The third mistake about religion, viz. A constrained and forced obedience to God's commandments. The religion of many (some of whom would seem most abhorrent from superstition) is nothing else but superstition properly so called. False religionists, having no inward sense of the Divine goodness, cannot truly love God; yet their sour and dreadful apprehensions of God compel them to serve Him. A slavish spirit in religion may be very prodigal in such kind of serving God as doth not pinch their corruptions; but in the great and weightier matters of religion, in such things as prejudice their beloved lusts, it is very needy and sparing. This servile spirit has low and mean thoughts of God, but a high opinion of its outward services, as conceiving that by such cheap things God is gratified and becomes indebted to it. The different effects of love, and slavish fear, in the truly, and in the falsely, religious.

3. ANOTHER particular wherein men mistake religion, is, *A constrained and forced obedience to God's commandments.* That which many men (amongst whom some would seem to be most abhorrent from superstition) call their religion, is, indeed, nothing else but "such an apprehension of God as renders Him grievous to men, and so destroys all free and cheerful converse with Him, and begets, instead thereof, a forced and dry devotion, void of inward life and love." Those servile spirits, which are not acquainted with God and His goodness, may be so haunted by the frightful thoughts of a Deity, as to scare and terrify them into some worship and observance of Him. They are apt to look upon Him as one clothed with austerity, or, as the Epicurean poet hath too truly

painted out their thoughts, as a *sævus dominus*, that is, in the language of the unprofitable servant in the gospel, "a hard master;" and, therefore, they think something must be done to please Him, and to mitigate His severity towards them: and though they cannot truly love Him, having no inward sense of His loveliness, yet they cannot but serve Him so far as these rigorous apprehensions lie upon them; though, notwithstanding, such as these are very apt to persuade themselves that they may pacify Him, and purchase His favour with some cheap services, as if heaven itself could become guilty of bribery, and an immutable justice be flattered into partiality and respect of persons. Because they are not acquainted with God, and know Him not as He is in Himself, therefore they are ready to paint Him forth to themselves in their own shape: and, because they themselves are full of peevishness and self-will, arbitrarily imposing and prescribing to others without sufficient evidence of reason, and are easily enticed by flatteries, they are apt to represent the Divinity also to themselves in the same form, and think they view the true portraiture and draught of their own genius in it; and, therefore, that they might please this angry deity of their own making, they care not sometimes to be lavish in such a kind of service of Him as doth not much pinch their own corruptions; nay, and it may be too, will seem to part with them sometimes, and give them a weeping farewell, if God, and their own awakened consciences, seem to frown upon them; though all their

obedience arise from nothing else, but the compulsions and necessities which their own sour and dreadful apprehensions of God lay upon them: and, therefore, in those things which more nearly touch their own beloved lusts, they will be as scant and sparing as may be; here they will be as strict with God as may be, that He may have no more than His due, as they think—like that unprofitable servant in the gospel, who, because his master was "an austere man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not scattered," was content and willing he should have his own again, but would not suffer him to have any more.

This servile spirit in religion is always illiberal and needy in the *magnalia legis*—the great and weightier matters of religion—and here weighs out obedience by drachms and scruples: it never finds itself more shrivelled and shrunk up, than when it is to converse with God; like those creatures that are generated of slime and mud, the more the summer sun shines upon them, and the nearer it comes to them, the more is all their vital strength dried up and spent away; their dreadful thoughts of God, like a cold eastern wind, blast all their blossoming affections, and nip them in the bud: these exhaust their native vigour, and make them weak and sluggish in all their motions toward God. Their religion is rather a prison, or a piece of penance to them, than any voluntary and free compliance of their souls with the Divine will: and yet, because they bear the burden and heat of the day, they think,

when the evening comes, they ought to be more liberally rewarded; such slavish spirits being ever apt inwardly to conceive that heaven receives some emolument or other by their hard labours, and so becomes indebted to them, because they see no true gain and comfort accruing from them to their own souls; and so, because they do God's work and not their own, they think they may reasonably expect a fair compensation, as having been profitable to Him. And this, I doubt, was the first and vulgar foundation of merit; though now the world is ashamed to own it.

But, alas! such an ungodlike religion as this can never be owned by God: the bondwoman and her son must be cast out. The spirit of true religion is of a more free, noble, ingenuous, and generous nature, arising out of the warm beams of the Divine love which first hatched it and brought it forth, and, therefore, is it afterwards perpetually bathing itself in that sweetest love that first begot it, and is always refreshed and nourished by it. This "love casteth out fear, fear which hath torment in it," and is, therefore, more apt to chase away souls once wounded with it from God, than to allure them to God. Such fear of God always carries in it a secret antipathy against Him, as being, as Plutarch speaks, "one that is so troublesome, that there is no quiet or peaceable living with him." Whereas love, by a strong sympathy, draws the souls of men, when it hath once laid hold upon them by its powerful insinuation, into the nearest conjunc-

tion that may be with the Divinity: it thaws all those frozen affections which a slavish fear had congealed and locked up, and makes the soul most cheerful, free, and nobly resolved in all its motions after God. It was well observed of old by Pythagoras, "we are never so well as when we approach to God"; when, in a way of religion, we make our addresses to God, then are our souls most cheerful. True religion and an inward acquaintance with God, discovers nothing in Him but pure and sincere goodness, nothing that might breed the least distaste or disaffection, or carry in it any semblance of displeasingness; and, therefore, the souls of good men are never pinching and sparing in their affections: then the torrent is most full and swells highest, when it empties itself into this unbounded ocean of the Divine Being. This makes all the commandments of God light and easy, and far from being grievous. There needs no law to compel a mind, actuated by the true spirit of Divine love, to serve God or to comply with His will. It is the choice of such a soul to endeavour to conform itself to Him, and draw from Him, as much as may be, an imitation of that goodness and perfection which it finds in Him. Such a Christian does not, therefore, obey His commands only because it is God's will he should do so, but because he sees the law of God to be truly perfect, as David speaks: his nature being reconciled to God, finds it all "holy, just, and good" as St. Paul speaks; and such a thing as his soul loves, "sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb;" and

he makes it "his meat and drink to do the will of God," as our Lord and Saviour did. And so I pass to the fourth and last particular, wherein religion is sometimes mistaken.

CHAPTER V.

The fourth and last mistake about religion, When a mere mechanical and artificial religion is taken for that which is a true impression of heaven upon the souls of men, and which moves like a new nature. How religion is, by some, made a piece of art, and how there may be specious and plausible imitations of the internals of religion as well as of the externals. The method and power of fancy in contriving such artificial imitations. How apt men are in these to deceive both themselves and others. The difference between those that are governed in their religion by fancy, and those that are actuated by the Divine Spirit and in whom religion is a living form. That true religion is no art, but a new nature. Religion discovers itself best in a serene and clear temper of mind, in deep humility, meekness, self-denial, universal love of God and all true goodness.

THE *fourth* and last particular wherein men misjudge themselves, is, *When a mere mechanical and artificial religion is taken for that which is a true impression of heaven upon the souls of men, and which moves like an inward nature.* True religion will not stoop to rules of art, nor be confined within the narrow compass thereof: no; where it is, we may cry out, with the Greek philosopher, "God is within": God hath there kindled, as it were, His

own life, which will move and act only according to the laws of heaven. But there are some mechanical Christians that can frame and fashion out religion so cunningly in their own souls, by that book-skill they have got of it, that it may many times deceive themselves, as if it were a true living thing. We often hear that mere pretenders to religion may go as far, in all the external acts of it, as those that are best acquainted with it: I doubt not, also, but many times there may be artificial imitations drawn of that which only lives in the souls of good men, by the powerful and wily magic of exalted fancies; as we read of some artificers, that have made images of living creatures, wherein they have not only drawn forth the outward shape, but seem almost to have copied out the life also in them. Men may make an imitation, as well of those things which we call the *internals* of religion, as of the *externals*. There may be a semblance of inward joy in God, of love to Him, and His precepts, of dependence upon Him, and a filial reverence of Him, which, by the contrivance and power of fancy, may be represented in a masque upon the stage of the animal part of a man's soul. Those Christians that fetch all their religion from pious books and discourses, hearing of such and such signs of grace, and evidences of salvation, and being taught to believe they must get those, that so they may go to heaven; may presently begin to set themselves to work, and, in an apish imitation, cause their animal powers and passions to represent all these; and fancy,

being well acquainted with all those several affections in the soul, that at any time express themselves towards outward things, may, by the power it hath over the passions, call them all forth in the same mode and fashion, and then conjoin with them some thoughts of God and divine things, which may serve, thus put together, for a handsome artifice of religion, wherein these mechanics may much applaud themselves.

I doubt not but there may be some who, to gain credit with themselves, and that glorious name of being the children of God, though they know nothing more of it but that it is a title that sounds well, would use their best skill to appear such to themselves, so qualified and moulded as they are told they must be. And, as many times credit and reputation among men may make them polish the ruggedness of their outward man, so, to gain their own good opinion, and a reputation with their own consciences which look more inwardly, they may also endeavour to make their inward man look sometimes more smooth and comely: and it is no hard matter for such chameleon-like Christians to turn, even their insides, into whatsoever hue and colour shall best please them, and then, Narcissus-like, to fall in love with themselves: a strong and nimble fancy having such command over the animal spirits, that it can send them forth, in full troops, which way soever it pleaseth, and, by their aid, call forth and raise any kind of passion it listeth; and, when it listeth, allay it again, as the poets say Æolus can do with

the winds. As they say of the force of imagination, that *vis imaginativa signat fœtum;* so imagination may stamp any idea that it finds within itself upon the passions, and turn them, as it pleases, to what seal it will set upon them, and mould them into any likeness; and a man, looking down and taking a view of the plot, as it is acted upon the stage of the animal powers, may like and approve it as a true platform of religion. Thus may they easily deceive themselves, and think their religion to be some mighty thing within them, that runs quite through them, and makes all these transformations within them; whereas, the rise and motion of it may be all in the animal and sensitive powers of the soul; and a wise observer of it may see whence it comes and whither it goes: it being, indeed, a thing which is "from the earth, earthy," and not like that true spirit of regeneration which comes from heaven, and begets a divine life in the souls of good men, and is not under the command of any such charms as these are, neither will it move according to those laws, and times, and measures, that we please to set to it; but we shall find it manifesting its mighty supremacy over the highest powers of our souls. Whereas, we may truly say of all mechanics in religion, and our mimic Christians, that they are not so much actuated and informed by their religion, as they inform that; the power of their own imagination deriving that force to it which bears it up, and guides all its motions and operations. And, therefore, they themselves having the power over it, can new mould

it as themselves please, according to any new pattern which shall please them better than the former: they can furnish this domestic scene of theirs with any kind of matter which the history of other men's religion may afford them; and, if need be, act over all the experiences of that sect of men to which they most addict themselves, so to the life, that they may seem to themselves as well experienced Christians as any others; and so, it may be, soar so aloft in self-conceit, as if they had already made their nests amongst the stars, and had viewed their own mansion in heaven. What was observed by the Stoic concerning the vulgar sort of men may as truly be said of this sort of Christians—their life is nothing else but a strong energy of fancy and opinion.

But besides, lest their religion might too grossly discover itself to be nothing else but a piece of art, there may be sometimes such extraordinary motions stirred up within them, which may prevent all their own thoughts, that they may seem to be a true operation of the Divine life; when, yet, all this is nothing else but the energy of their own self-love, touched with some fleshly apprehensions of Divine things, and excited by them. There are some things in our Christian religion that, when a carnal and unhallowed mind takes the chair, and gets the expounding of them, may seem very delicious to the fleshly appetites of men; some doctrines and notions of free grace and justification; the magnificent titles of sons of God and heirs of heaven; ever-flowing streams of joy and plea-

sure, in which blessed souls shall swim to all eternity; a glorious paradise in the world to come, always springing up with well-scented and fragrant beauties; a New Jerusalem, paved with gold, and bespangled with stars, comprehending in its vast circuit such numberless varieties, that a busy curiosity may spend itself about to all eternity. I doubt not but that sometimes the most fleshly and earthly men, that fly their ambition to the pomp of this world, may be so ravished with the conceits of such things as these, that they may seem to be made partakers of "the powers of the world to come;" I doubt not but that they may be as much exalted with them, as the souls of crazed and distracted persons seem to be sometimes, when their fancies play with those quick and nimble spirits, which a distempered frame of body, and unnatural heat in their heads, beget within them. Thus may these blazing comets rise up above the moon, and climb higher than the sun; which yet, because they have no solid consistency of their own, and are of a base and earthly alloy, will soon vanish and fall down again, being only borne up by an external force. They may seem to themselves to have attained higher than those noble Christians, that are gently moved by the natural force of true goodness; they may seem to be more full of God than those that are really informed and actuated by the Divine Spirit, and do move on steadily and constantly in the way towards heaven; as the seed that was sown in the thorny ground, grew up and lengthened out its blade

faster than that which was sown in the good and fruitful soil. And as the motions of our sense, fancy, and passions, while our souls are in this mortal condition, sunk down deeply into the body, are many times more vigorous, and make stronger impressions upon us, than those of the higher powers of the soul, which are more subtile and remote from these mixed and animal perceptions; that devotion which is there seated may seem to have more energy and life in it than that which gently, and with a more delicate kind of touch, spreads itself upon the understanding, and from thence mildly derives itself through our wills and affections. But howsoever the former may be more boisterous for a time, yet this is of a more consistent, spermatical, and thriving nature: for that, proceeding indeed from nothing else but a sensual and fleshly apprehension of God and true happiness, is but of a flitting and fading nature; and as the sensible powers and faculties grow more languid, or the sun of Divine light shines more brightly upon us, these earthly devotions, like our culinary fires, will abate their heat and fervour. But a true, celestial, warmth will never be extinguished, because it is of an immortal nature; and being once seated vitally in the souls of men, it will regulate and order all the motions of it in a due manner, as the natural heat radicated in the hearts of living creatures hath the dominion and economy of the whole body under it, and sends forth warm blood, and spirits, and vital nourishment, to every part and member of it. True reli-

gion is no piece of artifice; it is no boiling up of our imaginative powers, nor the glowing heats of passion; though these are too often mistaken for it, when, in our jugglings in religion, we cast a mist before our own eyes: but it is a new nature, informing the souls of men; it is a godlike frame of spirit, discovering itself, most of all, in serene and clear minds, in deep humility, meekness, self-denial, universal love of God and all true goodness, without partiality and without hypocrisy; whereby we are taught to know God, and knowing Him to love Him, and conform ourselves, as much as may be, to all that perfection which shines forth in Him.

THE

EXCELLENCY AND NOBLENESS

OF

TRUE RELIGION,

1. IN ITS RISE AND ORIGINAL. 2. IN ITS NATURE AND ESSENCE. 3. IN ITS PROPERTIES AND OPERATIONS. 4. IN ITS PROGRESS. 5. IN ITS TERM AND END.

THE

EXCELLENCY AND NOBLENESS

OF

TRUE RELIGION.

The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.—Prov. xv. 24.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the whole book of the Proverbs we find Solomon, one of the eldest sons of Wisdom, always standing up and calling her blessed: his heart was both enlarged and filled with the pure influences of her beams, and, therefore, was perpetually adoring that sun which gave him light. "Wisdom is justified of all her children;" though the offspring of darkness and the children of folly see no beauty nor comeliness in her, that they should desire her, as they said of Christ. That mind which is not touched with an inward sense of Divine wisdom, cannot estimate the true worth of it. But when Wisdom once displays her own excellences and glories in a purified soul, she is entertained there with the greatest love and delight, and receives her own image, reflected

back to herself in sweetest returns of love and praise. We have a clear manifestation of this sacred sympathy in Solomon, whom we may not unfitly call *sapientiæ organum*—an instrument Wisdom herself had tuned on which to play her divine lessons: his words were every where full of divine sweetness, matched with strength and beauty, "having in them a great deal of mind," or, as himself phraseth it, "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." The mind of a proverb is to utter wisdom in a mystery—as the apostle sometimes speaks—and to wrap up Divine truth in a kind of enigmatical way, though in vulgar expressions. This method of delivering Divine doctrine (not to mention the writings of the ancient philosophers) we find frequently pursued in the holy Scripture, thereby both opening and hiding, at once, the truth which is offered to us. A proverb or parable being once unfolded, by reason of its affinity with the fancy, the more sweetly insinuates itself into that, and is from thence, with the greater advantage, transmitted to the understanding. In this state, we are not able to behold truth in its own native beauty and lustre; but, while we are veiled with mortality, truth must veil itself too, that it may the more freely converse with us.[1] St. Austin hath well assigned the reason why we are so much delighted with metaphors, allegories, &c. because they are so much proportioned to our senses, with which our reason hath contracted an intimacy and familiarity. And therefore God, to accommodate His truth to our weak capacities, does, as

it were, embody it in earthly expressions; according to that ancient maxim of the Cabbalists, "the light from above never descends without a veil," agreeable to which is that of Dionysius not seldom quoted by the schoolmen: "it is impossible for the heavenly light to shine upon us otherwise than from under divers sacred coverings."

Thus much by way of preface or introduction to these words, being one of Solomon's excellent proverbs, *viz.* "The way of life is above to the wise." Without any mincing or mangling of the words, or running out into any critical curiosities about them, I shall, from these words, take occasion to set forth the nobleness and generous spirit of true religion, which I suppose to be meant here by "the way of life." The word here rendered "*above*," may signify that which is divine and heavenly, high and excellent, as the word ἄνω does in the New Testament. St. Austin supposeth the things of religion to be meant by the τὰ ἄνω,*—"the things which are above,"—for this reason, that "because of their surpassing virtue they are high above the things on the earth." And in this sense I shall consider it, my purpose being from hence to discourse of the excellent and noble spirit of true religion, whether it be taken *in abstracto*—as it is in itself; or *in concreto*—as it becomes an inward form and soul to the minds and spirits of good men; and this

* Col. iii. 1. 2.

in opposition to that low and base-born spirit of irreligion, which is perpetually sinking from God, till it couches to the very centre of misery, "the lowermost hell."

In discoursing upon this argument, I shall observe this method; *viz.* I shall consider the excellency and nobleness of true religion,

1. In its rise and original.
2. In its nature and essence.
3. In its properties and operations.
4. In its progress.
5. In its term and end.

CHAPTER I.

1. The nobleness of religion in regard of its original and fountain: it comes from heaven and moves toward heaven again. God the first excellency and primitive perfection. All perfections and excellences in any kind are to be measured by their approach to, and participation of, the first perfection. Religion the greatest participation of God: none capable of this Divine communication but the highest of created beings: and, consequently, religion the greatest excellency. A two-fold fountain in God whence religion flows, viz. 1. His nature. 2. His will. Of truth, natural and revealed. Of an outward and inward revelation of God's will.

WE begin with the *first, viz. True religion is a noble thing in its rise and original, and in regard of its descent.* True religion derives its pedigree from heaven—is "an offspring of heaven"—it comes from heaven, and constantly moves toward heaven again: it is a beam from

God, as "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," as St. James speaks. God is the first truth and primitive goodness: true religion is a vigorous efflux and emanation of both upon the spirits of men, and, therefore, is called "a participation of the Divine nature." Indeed, God hath copied out Himself in all created being, having no other pattern to frame any thing by, than His own essence; so that all created being is "a clouded likeness of uncreated being," and is, by some stamp or other of God upon it, at least remotely allied to Him: but true religion is such a communication of the Divinity, as none but the highest of created beings are capable of. On the other side, sin and wickedness is of the basest and lowest original, as being nothing else but a perfect degeneration from God, and those eternal rules of goodness which are derived from Him. Religion is a heaven-born thing, the seed of God in the spirits of men, whereby they are formed to a similitude and likeness of Himself. A true Christian is every way of a most noble extraction, of a heavenly and divine pedigree, being born "from above," as St. John expresseth it. The line of all earthly nobility, if it were followed to the beginning, would lead to Adam, where all the lines of descent meet in one; and the root of all extractions would be found planted in nothing else but Adamah, "red earth:" but a Christian derives his line from Christ, who is the

only-begotten Son of God, "the shining forth of His glory, and the character of His person," as He is styled. We may truly say of Christ and Christians, as Zebah and Zalmunna said of Gideon's brethren, "As he is, so are they (according to their capacity,) each one resembling the children of a king." Titles of worldly honour in heaven's heraldry are only *tituli nominales;* but titles of divine dignity signify some real thing, some real and divine communications to the spirits and minds of men. All perfections and excellencies, in any kind, are to be measured by their approach to that primitive Perfection of all, God Himself; and, therefore, participation of the Divine nature cannot but entitle a Christian to the highest degree of dignity: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Thus much for a more general discovery of the nobleness of religion, as to its fountain and original: we may further, and more particularly, take notice of this in reference to that twofold fountain in God, from whence all true religion flows and issues forth, *viz.* 1. *His immutable nature.* 2. *His will.*

1. *The immutable nature of God.* From thence arise all those eternal rules of truth and goodness, which are the foundation of all religion, and which God, at the first creation, folded up in the soul of man. These we may call the truths of natural inscription; understanding, hereby, either those fundamental principles of truth which

reason, by a naked intuition, may behold in God, or those necessary corollaries and deductions that may be drawn from thence. I cannot think it as proper to say, that God ought infinitely to be loved because He commands it, as because He is, indeed, an infinite and unchangeable goodness. God hath stamped a copy of His own archetypal loveliness upon the soul, that man, by reflecting into himself, might behold there the glory of God; see within his soul all those ideas of truth which concern the nature and essence of God, by reason of its own resemblance to God; and, so, beget within himself the most free and generous motions of love to God. Reason in man being "light of light"—a light flowing from the Fountain and Father of lights—and being, as Cicero phraseth it, "a partial likeness of the eternal reason:"* (as the law of nature, "the law written in man's heart,"† is "a partaking of the eternal law in a rational creature:")‡ it was to enable man to work out of himself all those notions of God, which are the true groundwork of love and obedience to God, and conformity to Him; and in moulding the inward man into the greatest conformity to the nature of God was the perfection and efficacy of the religion of nature. But since man's fall from God, the inward virtue and vigour of reason is much abated, the soul having suffered "the loss of its wings," as Plato

* The expression is more probably borrowed from Aquinas.

† Rom. ii. 15. ‡ Aquinas.

speaks :* those principles of divine truth, which were first engraven upon man's heart with the finger of God, are now, as the characters of some ancient monuments, less clear and legible than at first. And, therefore, besides the truth of natural inscription,

2. God hath provided the truth of Divine revelation, which issues forth from His own free will, and clearly discovers the way of our return to God, from Whom we are fallen. And this truth, with the effects and productions of it in the minds of men, the Scripture is wont to set forth under the name of *grace*, as proceeding merely from the free bounty and overflowings of the Divine love. Of this revealed will is that of the apostle to be understood, "The things of God knoweth none;"† "none," neither angel nor man, could know the mind of God, could unlock the breast of God, or search out the counsels of His will. But God, out of the infinite riches of His compassions toward mankind, is pleased to unbosom His secrets, and most clearly to manifest "the way into the holiest of all," and "bring to light life and immortality," and, in these last ages, to send His Son,

* "The wing is that corporeal element which is most akin to the divine, and is intended to soar aloft and carry that which gravitates downward into the upper region, where dwell the gods. Now the divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness, and the like ; and by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows apace ; but when fed upon evil and foulness, and the like, wastes and falls away."—Phædr. Jowett, ii. 123.

† 1 Cor. ii. 11.

who lay in His bosom from all eternity, to teach us His will, and declare His mind to us. When we "look unto the earth, then behold darkness and dimness of anguish," that I may use those words of the prophet Isaiah. But when we look towards heaven, then behold light breaking forth upon us, like the eyelids of the morning, and spreading its wings over the horizon of mankind, sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, "to guide our feet into the way of peace."

But, besides this outward revelation of God's will to men, there is also an inward impression of it on their minds and spirits, which is, in a more special manner, attributed to God. We cannot see Divine things but in a Divine light: God only, who is the true light, and in whom there is no darkness at all, can so shine out of Himself upon our glassy understandings, as to beget in them a picture of Himself, His own will and pleasure, and turn the soul, as the phrase is, like wax or "clay to the seal" of His own light and love. He that made our souls in His own image and likeness, can easily find a way into them. The word that God speaks, having found a way into the soul, imprints itself there, as with the point of a diamond, and becomes "a word graven in the soul of him who has learned it," that I may borrow Plato's expression. Men may teach the grammar and rhetoric, but God teaches the divinity. Thus it is God alone that acquaints the soul with the truths of revelation: and He it is also that does strengthen and raise the soul to better

apprehensions even of natural truth; "God being that in the intellectual world, which the sun is in the sensible," as some of the ancient fathers love to speak, and the ancient philosophers too, who meant God by their *intellectus agens*, whose proper work they supposed to be, not so much to enlighten the object, as the faculty.

CHAPTER II.

2. The nobleness of religion in respect of its nature, briefly discovered in some particulars. How a man actuated by religion, 1. Lives above the world; 2. Converses with himself, and knows how to love, value, and reverence himself, in the best sense; 3. Lives above himself, not being content to enjoy himself, except he may enjoy God too, and himself in God. How he denies himself for God. To deny a man's self, is not to deny right reason, for that were to deny God, instead of denying himself for God. Self-love the only principle that actuates wicked men. The happy privileges of a soul united to God.

2. WE have done with the first head, and come now to discourse, with the like brevity, on another, (our purpose being to insist most upon the third particular, *viz. The nobleness of religion in its properties*, after we have handled the second) which is *The excellency and nobleness of religion in regard of its nature*, whether it be taken *in abstracto* or *in concreto*; which we shall treat of promiscuously, without any rigid tying of ourselves to exact rules of art: and so we shall glance at it in these following notions, rising as it were step by step.

1. *A good man, that is actuated by religion, lives above the world and all mundane delights and excellences.* The soul is too vigorous and puissant a thing, when it is once restored to the possession of its own being, than to be bounded within the narrow sphere of mortality, or to be straitened within the narrow prison of sensual and corporeal delights; but it will break forth with the greatest vehemency, and ascend upwards towards immortality: and, when it converses more intimately with religion, it can scarce look back upon its own converses, though in a lawful way, with earthly things, without being touched with a holy shamefacedness and modest blushing; and, as Porphyry speaks of Plotinus: "it seems to be ashamed that it should be in the body." It is true religion only that teaches and enables men to die to this world and to all earthly things, and to rise above that vaporous sphere of sensual and earthly pleasures, which darken the mind, and hinder it from enjoying the brightness of divine light: the proper motion of religion is still upwards to its first original. Whereas, on the contrary, the souls of wicked men "are carried around in the deep below," as Plato somewhere speaks, "being moistened with the exudations of their sensual parts, become heavy and sink down into earthly things, and couch, as near as may be, to the centre." Wicked men bury their souls in their bodies: all their projects and designs are bounded within the compass of this earth which they tread upon. The fleshly mind regards nothing but flesh, and never rises above

the outward matter, but always creeps up and down, like shadows, upon the surface of the earth: and if it begins, at any time, to make any faint essays upwards, it presently finds itself laden with a weight of sensuality which draws it down again. It was the opinion of the Academics, that the souls of wicked men, after their death, could not, of a long season, depart from the graves and sepulchres where their mates were buried; but there wandered up and down in a desolate manner, as not being able to leave those bodies to which they were so much wedded in this life.*

2. *A good man, one that is actuated by religion, lives in converse with his own reason;* he lives at the height of his own being. This a great philosopher makes the property of a good man: "He knows how to converse with

* Plato, Phaedo; Jowett, i. 457-8, where the following lines from Milton's Comus are aptly quoted :—

"But when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gesture, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft-seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering, and sitting by a new made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state."

himself, and truly to love and value himself:"*—he measures not himself, like the epicure, by his inferior and earthly part, but by an immortal essence, and that of Him which is from above; and so does "climb up to the height of that immortal principle which is within him."† The Stoics thought no man a fit auditor of their ethics, till he were dispossessed of that opinion, that man was nothing but "a compound of soul and body," as professing to teach men how to live only "according to reason," as they speak. Perhaps their divinity was in some things too rigid; but I am sure a good man acts the best of this their doctrine in the best sense, and knows better how to reverence himself, without any self-flattery or admiration, than ever any Stoic did. He principally looks upon himself as being what he is, rather by his soul than by his body: he values himself by his soul, that being which hath the greatest affinity with God; and, so, does not seek himself in the fading vanities of this life, nor in those poor and low delights of his senses, as wicked men do; but as the philosopher doth well express it, "his endeavour is to flee from the body and from the passions of the body, and to withdraw into himself," ‡ and when the soul thus retires into itself, and views its own worth and excellency, it presently finds a chaste and virgin love stirred up within itself towards itself, and is from within the more excited and obliged as Simplicius speaks, "to mind the

* Proclus. † Plotinus. ‡ Simplicius.

preserving of its own dignity and glory." To conclude this particular. A good man endeavours to walk by eternal and unchangeable rules of reason: reason, in a good man, sits in the throne, and governs all the power of his soul in a sweet harmony and agreement with itself: whereas wicked men live only "a life of opinion,"* being led up and down by the foolish fires of their own sensual apprehensions. In wicked men, there is a democracy of wild lusts and passions, which violently hurry the soul up and down with restless motions. All sin and wickedness is "a sedition stirred up in the soul by the sensitive powers against reason." It was one of the great evils that Solomon saw under the sun; "Servants on horseback, and princes going as servants upon the ground." We may find the moral of it in all wicked men, whose souls are only as servants to wait upon their senses. In all such men, the whole course of nature is turned upside down, and the cardinal points of motion in this little world are changed to contrary positions: but the motions of a good man are methodical, regular, and concentrical to reason. It is a fond imagination that religion should extinguish reason; whereas religion makes it more illustrious and vigorous; and they that live most in the exercise of religion, shall find their reason most enlarged. I might add, that reason, in relation to the capacitating of man for converse with God, was thought, by some, to be

* i.e., a life not guided by fixed and true principles.

the formal difference of man. Plutarch, after a large debate whether brutes had not reason in them as well as man, concludes it negatively upon this ground—"because they had no knowledge and sense of the Deity." In Cicero's account, this capableness of religion seemed to be nothing different from rationality, and, therefore, he doubts not to give this for the most proper characteristic of reason, that it is the bond of union between God and man. And, so, with them (not to name others of the same apprehensions) *animal rationale* and *animal capax religionis* seemed to be of the like importance; reason, as enabling and fitting man to converse with God, by knowing Him and loving Him, being a character most unquestionably differencing man from brute creatures.

3. *A good man, one that is informed by true religion, lives above himself, and is raised to an intimate converse with the Divinity.* He moves in a larger sphere than his own being, and cannot be content to enjoy himself, except he may enjoy God also, and himself in God.

This we shall consider in two ways.

1. In the self-denial of good men: they are content and ready to deny themselves for God. I mean not that they should deny their own reason, as some would have it; for that were to deny a beam of Divine light, and so to deny God, instead of denying ourselves for Him. It is better resolved by some philosophers in this point, that "to follow reason is to follow God;" and, again, "to

obey right reason is the same as to obey God."* But by self-denial I mean, the soul's quitting all its own interest in itself, and an entire resignation of itself to Him, as to all points of service and duty: and thus the soul loves itself in God, and lives in the possession, not so much of its own being, as of the Divinity; desiring only to be great in God, to glory in His light, and spread itself in His fulness; to be filled always by Him, and to empty itself again into Him; to receive all from Him, and to expend all for Him; and so to live, not as its own, but as God's. The highest ambition of a good man is to serve the will of God: he takes no pleasure in himself, nor in anything within himself, further than he sees a stamp of God upon it. Whereas wicked men are imprisoned within the narrow circumference of their own beings, and perpetually frozen into a cold self-love, which binds up all the innate vigour of their souls, that it cannot break forth or express itself in any noble way. The soul in which religion rules, says, as St. Paul did, "I live; and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." On the contrary, a wicked man swells in his own thoughts, and pleaseth himself more or less with the imagination of a self-sufficiency. The Stoics, seeing they could not raise themselves up to God, endeavoured to bring down God to their own model, imagining the Deity to be nothing else but some greater kind of animal, and

* Hierocles.

a wise man to be almost one of his peers.* And this is more or less the genius of wicked men; they will be something in themselves, they wrap up themselves in their own being, move up and down in a sphere of self-love, live a professed independency of God, and maintain a *meum et tuum* between God and themselves. It is the character only of a good man to be able to deny and disown himself, and to make a full surrender of himself unto God; forgetting himself, and minding nothing but the will of his Creator; triumphing in nothing more than in his own nothingness, and in the allness of the Divinity. But indeed this, his being nothing, is the only way to be all things; this, his having nothing, the truest way of possessing all things.

2. As a good man lives above himself in a way of self-denial, so he lives also above himself as he lives in the enjoyment of God: and this is the very soul and essence of true religion, to unite the soul in the nearest intimacy and conjunction with God, who is "the fountain of life and reason, and the root of the soul," as Plotinus speaks. Then, indeed, the soul lives most nobly, when it feels itself to "live, and move, and have its being in God;" which though the law of nature makes the common condition of all created being, yet is it only true religion that can give us a more feeling and comfortable

* *A wise* man lives on an equality with the gods; he is a companion of the gods, not a suppliant. Seneca.

sense of it. God is not present to wicked men, when His Almighty essence supports them and maintains them in being; "but He is present to him that can touch Him," hath an inward feeling knowledge of God, and is intimately united to Him; "but to him that cannot thus touch Him He is not present."*

Religion is life and spirit, which, flowing out from God, who is that self existing Being that hath life in Himself, returns to Him again as into its own original, carrying the souls of good men up with it. The spirit of religion is always ascending upwards, and, spreading itself through the whole essence of the soul, loosens it from a self-confinement and narrowness, and so renders it more capacious of divine enjoyment. God envies not His people any good; but, being infinitely bountiful, is pleased to impart Himself to them in this life, so far as they are capable of His communications: they stay not for all their happiness till they come to heaven. Religion always carries its reward along with it, and when it acts most vigorously upon the mind and spirit of man, it then, most of all, fills it with an inward sense of Divine sweetness. To conclude. To walk with God, is, in Scripture, made the character of a good man, and it is the highest perfection and privilege of created nature to converse with the Divinity. Whereas, on the contrary, wicked men converse with nothing but their lusts and the vanities of this

* Plotinus.

fading life, which here flatter them, for a while, with unhallowed delights, and a mere shadow of contentment; and when these are gone, they find both substance and shadow to be lost eternally. But true goodness brings in a constant revenue of solid and substantial satisfaction to the spirit of a good man, delighting always to sit by those eternal springs that feed and maintain it: the spirit of a good man, as it is well expressed by the philosopher, "is immovably established in the essence of the divine goodness,"* and is always drinking in fountain-goodness, and fills itself more and more, till it is filled with all the fulness of God.

CHAPTER III.

3. The nobleness of religion in regard of its properties, &c., of which this is one, viz. Religion enlarges all the faculties of the soul, and begets a true ingenuousness, liberty, and amplitude, the most free and generous spirit in the minds of good men. The nearer any being comes to God, the more large and free; the further it slides from God, the more straitened. Sin is the sinking of man's soul from God into sensual selfishness. An account when the most generous freedom of the soul is to be taken in its just proportions. How mechanical and formal Christians make an art of religion, set it such bounds as may not exceed the scant measure of their principles; and then fit their own notions as so many examples to it. A good man finds not his religion without him, but as a living

* Simplicius.

principle within him. God's immutable and eternal goodness the unchangeable rule of His will. Peevish, self-willed, and imperious men shape out such notions of God as are agreeable to this pattern of themselves. The truly religious have better apprehensions of God.

HAVING discoursed of the nobleness of religion in its original and nature, we come now to consider the excellency of religion in its properties, its proper effects, and vital operations. In treating of this third particular we shall, as we have formerly done, without tying ourselves precisely to any strict rules of art and method, confound the notions of religion *in abstracto* and *in concreto* together, handling them promiscuously. As religion is a noble thing, 1. In respect of its *original*, 2. In respect of its *nature;* so also 3. In respect of its *properties* and *effects.*

1. The *first* property and effect of true religion whereby it expresseth its own nobleness is this; *That it widens and enlarges all the faculties of the soul, and begets a true ingenuousness, liberty, and amplitude, the most free and generous spirit, in the minds of good men.* Those in whom religion rules, are "sons of nobles."* There is a true generous spirit within them, which shows the nobleness of their extraction. The Jews have a good maxim to this purpose: "None truly noble, but he that applies himself to religion, and a faithful observance of the divine

* Eccles., x. 17.

law." Cicero could see so much in his natural philosophy as made him say, "Science enlarges the mind, and lifts it up to things divine." But this is most true of religion, that, in a higher sense, it does work the soul into a true and divine amplitude. There is a living soul of religion in good men which, spreading itself through all their faculties, spirits all the wheels of motion, and enables them to dilate and extend themselves more fully upon God and all divine things, without being pinched or straitened within themselves. Whereas wicked men are of most narrow and confined spirits; they are so contracted by the pinching particularities of earthly and created things, so imprisoned in a dark dungeon of sensuality and selfishness, so straitened through their carnal designs and ends, that they cannot stretch themselves, nor look beyond the horizon of time and sense.

The nearer any being comes to God, who is that infinite fulness that fills all in all, the more vast, and large, and unbounded it is; as the further it slides from Him, the more it is straitened and confined; as Plato hath long since concluded concerning the condition of sensual men, that they live "like a shellfish," and can never move up and down but in their own prison, which they ever carry about with them. Were I to define sin, I would call it, *The sinking of a man's soul from God into a sensual selfishness.* All the freedom that wicked men have, is but like that of banished men—to wander up and down

in the wilderness of this world from one den and cave to another.

The more high and noble any being is, the deeper radication have all its innate virtues and properties within it, and are by so much the more universal in their issues and actings upon other things: and such an inward, living principle of virtue and activity, further heightened, and united, and informed with light and truth, we may call liberty. Of this truly noble and divine liberty, religion is the mother and nurse, leading the soul to God, and so impregnating that inward, vital principle of activity and vigour that is embosomed in it, that it is able, without any inward disturbance and resistance from any controlling lusts, to exercise itself, and act with the greatest complacency, in the most full and ample manner, upon that first, universal, and unbounded essence which is God Himself. The most generous freedom can never be taken in its full and just dimensions and proportion, but then, when all the powers of the soul exercise and spend themselves, in the most large and ample manner, upon the infinite and essential goodness, as upon their own most proper object. If we should ask a good man, when he finds himself best at ease, when he finds himself most free; his answer would be, when he is under the most powerful constraints of Divine love. There is a sort of mechanical Christians in the world, who, not finding religion acting like a living form within them, satisfy themselves only to make an art of it, and rather inform and

actuate it, than to be informed by it; and setting it such bounds and limits as may not exceed the short and scant measures of their own homeborn principles, then they endeavour to fit the notions of their own minds as so many examples to it: and, it being a circle of their own making, they can either ampliate or contract it, accordingly as they can force their own minds and dispositions to agree and suit with it. But true religion, indeed, is no art, but an inward nature that contains all the laws and measures of its motion within itself. A good man finds not his religion without him, but as a living principle within him; and all his faculties are still endeavouring to unite themselves more and more in the nearest intimacy with it, as with their proper perfection. There is that amiableness in religion, that strong sympathy between the soul and it, that it needs carry no testimonials or commendations along with it. If it could be supposed that God should plant a religion in the soul, that had no affinity or alliance with it, it would grow there but as a strange slip. But God, when He gives His laws to men, does not, by virtue of His absolute dominion, dictate anything at random, and in such an arbitrary way, as some imagine; but He measures all by His own eternal goodness. Had God Himself been anything else than the first and greatest good of man, then to have loved Him with the full strength of all our faculties should not have been "the first and greatest commandment," as our Saviour tells us it is. Some are apt to look upon God as some peevish

and self-willed being, because themselves are such : and, seeing that their own absolute and naked wills are for the most part the rules of all their actions, and the impositions which they lay upon others, they think that heaven's monarchy is such an arbitrary thing too, as being governed by nothing else but by an Almighty absolute will. But the soul that is most intimately acquainted with the Divine will, would more certainly resolve us, that God's unchangeable goodness (which makes the divinity to be a uniform thing, and to settle together upon its own centre, as I may speak with reverence) is also the unchangeable rule of His will; neither can He any more swerve from it, than He can swerve from Himself. Nor does He charge any duty upon man, without consulting first of all with His goodness : which being the original and adequate object of a good man's will and affections, it must needs be, that all the issues and effluxes of it be entertained with an answerable complacency and cheerfulness. This is the hinge upon which all true religion turns, the proper centre about which it moves ; which, taking a fast and sure hold of an innate and correspondent principle in the soul of man, raiseth it up above the confines of mortality, and, in the day of its mighty power, makes it become a free-will offering unto God.

CHAPTER IV.

The second property discovering the nobleness of religion, viz. That it restores man to a just power and dominion over himself, and enables him to overcome his self-will and passions. Of self-will, and the many evils that flow from it. That religion does nowhere discover its power and prowess so much, as in subduing this dangerous and potent enemy. The highest and noblest victories are those over our self-will and passions. Of self-denial, and the having power over our wills; the happiness and the privileges of such a state. How that magnanimity and puissance, which religion begets in holy souls, differ from and excel that gallantry and puissance, which the great Nimrods of this world boast of.

2. THE *second* property or effect of religion, whereby it discovers its own nobleness, (and it is somewhat akin to the former particular, and will help further to illustrate and enforce it,) is this, *That it restores a good man to a just power and dominion over himself, and his own will, and enables him to overcome himself, his own self-will and passions, and to command himself and all his powers for God.* It is only religion that restores that self-control to which the Stoical philosophy so impotently pretended: it is this only that enthrones man's deposed reason, and establishes within him a just empire over all those blind powers and passions, which so impetuously rend a man from the possession and enjoyment of himself. Those turbulent and unruly, uncertain and unconstant motions of passion and self-will, that dwell in degenerate minds, divide them perpetually from themselves, and are

always moulding several factions and tumultuous combinations within them against the dominion of reason. And the only way to unite man firmly to himself is by uniting him to God, and establishing in him a firm amity and agreement with the first and primitive Being.

There is nothing in the world so boisterous as a man's own self-will, which is never guided by any fixed or steady rules, but is perpetually hurried to and fro by a blind *impetus* of pride and passions issuing from within itself. This is the true source and spring of all that envy, malice, bitterness of spirit, malecontentedness and impatience, of all those black and dark passions, those inordinate desires and lusts, that reign in the hearts and lives of wicked men. A man's own self-will throws him out of all true enjoyment of his own being: therefore, it was our Saviour's counsel to His disciples, "In patience possess ye your souls." We may say of that self-will which is lodged in the heart of a wicked man, as the Jews speak of the *figmentum malum* so often mentioned in their writings, that it is the prince of death and darkness, which is at continual enmity with heaven; and the filthiness and poison of the serpent. This is the seed of the evil spirit, which is perpetually at enmity with the seed of God and the heaven-born nature: its design and scope is, with a giant-like pride, to climb up into the throne of the Almighty, and to establish an unbounded tyranny in contradiction to the will of God, which is nothing else but the issue and efflux of His

eternal and unbounded goodness. This is the very heart of the old Adam that is within men. This is the hellish spirit of self-will: it would solely prescribe laws to all things; it would fain be the source and fountain of all affairs and events; it would judge all things at its own tribunal. They, in whose spirits this principle rules, would have their own fancies and opinions, their perverse and boisterous wills to be the just square and measure of all good and evil; these are the plumb-lines they apply to all things, to find out their rectitude or obliquity. He that will not submit himself to, nor comply with, the eternal and uncreated will, but, instead of it, endeavours to set up his own will, makes himself the most real idol in the world, and exalts himself against all that is called God, and ought to be worshipped. To worship a graven image, or to make cakes and burn incense to the queen of heaven, is not a worse idolatry than it is for a man to set up self-will, to devote himself to the serving of it, and to give up himself to a compliance with his own will, as contrary to the divine and eternal will. When God made the world, He did not make it merely for the exercise of His Almighty power, and then throw it out of His hands, and leave it alone, to subsist by itself, as a thing that had no further relation to Him: but He derived Himself through the whole creation, so gathering and knitting up all the several pieces of it again; that, as the first production and continued subsistence of all things are from Himself, so the ultimate resolution and

tendency of all things might be to Him. Now that which first endeavoured after a divorce between God and His creation, and to make a conquest of it, was that diabolical arrogancy and self-will, that crept up and wound itself, serpent-like, into apostate minds and spirits. This is the true strain of that hellish nature, to live independently of God, and to derive the principles from another beginning, and carry on the line of all motions and operations to another end, than God Himself, by whom, and to whom, and for whom, all things subsist.

From what hath been said concerning this powerful and dangerous enemy, that wars against our souls, and against the Divine will, may the excellency and noble spirit of true religion appear, in that it tames the impetuousness and turbulency of this self-will. Then, indeed, does religion perform the highest and bravest conquests; then does it display the greatness of its strength, and the excellency of its power, when it overcomes this great Arimanius, that hath so firmly seated himself in the very centre of the soul. "Who is the man of courage and valour? It is he that subdues his concupiscence, his own will:" is a Jewish maxim attributed to Ben Zoma, and a most undoubted truth. This was the grand lesson that our great Lord and Master came to teach us, *viz.* To deny our own wills; neither was there any thing that He endeavoured more to promote by His own example, as He tells us of Himself, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent

me;" and, again: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God, yea thy law is within my heart:" and in His greatest agonies, with a clear and cheerful submission to the Divine will, He often repeats it; "Not my will, but thine be done:" and so He hath taught us to pray, and so to live. This, indeed, is the true life and spirit of religion; this is religion in its meridian altitude, its just dimensions. A true Christian that hath power over his own will, may live nobly and happily, and enjoy a clear heaven within the serenity of his own mind perpetually. When the sea of this world is most rough and tempestuous about him, then can he ride safely at anchor within the haven, by a sweet compliance of his will with God's will. He can look about him, and, with an even and indifferent mind, behold the world either smile or frown upon him; neither will he abate the least of his contentment, for all the ill and unkind usage he meets withal in this life. He that hath got the mastery over his own will, feels no violence from without, finds no contests within; and, like a strong man keeping his house, he preserves all his goods in safety: and when God calls for him out of this state of mortality, he finds in himself a power to lay down his own life; neither is it so much taken from him, as quietly and freely surrendered up by him. This is the highest piece of prowess, the noblest achievement, by which a man becomes lord over himself, and the master of his own thoughts, motions and purposes. This is the

royal prerogative, the high dignity conferred upon good men by our Lord and Saviour, whereby they, overcoming this both His and their enemy, their self-will and passions, are enabled to sit down with Him in His throne, as He, overcoming in another way, "is set down with His Father in His throne;" as the phrase is.

Religion begets the most heroic, free, and generous motions in the minds of good men. There is nowhere so much of a truly magnanimous and raised spirit, as in those who are best acquainted with the power of religion. Other men are slaves and captives to one vanity or other: but the truly religious is above them all, and able to command himself and all his powers for God. That bravery and gallantness, which seem to be in the great Nimrods of this world, are nothing else but the swelling of their own unbounded pride and vain-glory. It hath been observed of the greatest monarchs of the world, that, in the midst of their triumphs, they themselves have been led captives to one vice or another. All the gallantry and puissance of which the bravest spirits of the world boast, is but a poor, confined thing, and extends itself only to some particular cases and circumstances: but the valour and puissance of a soul impregnated by religion hath, in a sort, a universal extent, as St. Paul speaks of himself: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me:" it is not determined to this or that particular object, or time, or place, but all things whatsoever belong to a creature fall under the level

thereof. Religion is by St. Paul described to be "the spirit of power" in opposition to the spirit of fear, as all sin is by Simplicius well described to be "impotency and weakness." Sin, by its deadly infusions into the soul of man, wastes and eats out the innate vigour of the soul, and casts it into such a deep lethargy, as that it is not able to recover itself: but religion, like that *balsamum vitæ*, being once conveyed into the soul, awakens and enlivens it, and makes it renew its strength like an eagle, and mount strongly upwards towards heaven; and so, uniting the soul to God, the centre of life and strength, it renders it undaunted and invincible. Who can tell the inward life and vigour that the soul may be filled with, when once it is in conjunction with an Almighty essence? There is a latent and hidden virtue in the soul of man, which then begins to discover itself, when the Divine Spirit spreads forth its influences upon it. The more spiritual any thing is, and the higher and nobler it is in its being, the more active and vigorous it is; as the more any thing falls and sinks into matter, the more dull, and sluggish, and unwieldy it is. The Platonists were wont to call all things that participated most of matter unrealities. Now, nothing doth more purify, more sublimate and exalt the soul, than religion, when the soul suffers God to sit within it, "as a refiner and purifier of silver," and when it "abides the day of his coming; for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Thus the soul, being purified and spiritualized,

and changed more and more into the glorious image of God, is able to do all things, "out of weakness is made strong," gives proof of its Divine vigour and activity, and shows itself to be a noble and puissant spirit, such as God did at first create it.

CHAPTER V.

The third property or effect discovering the nobleness of religion, viz. That it directs and enables a man to propound to himself the best end, viz. The glory of God, and his own becoming like unto God. Low and particular ends and interests both debase and straiten a man's spirit: the universal, highest, and last end both ennobles and enlarges it. A man is such as the end is he aims at. The great power the end hath to mould and fashion man into its likeness. Religion obliges a man, not to seek himself, nor to drive a trade for himself; but to seek the glory of God, to live wholly to Him; and guides him steadily and uniformly to the one chief good and last end. Men are prone to flatter themselves with a pretended aiming at the glory of God. A more full and distinct explication of what is meant by a man's directing all his actions to the glory of God. What it is truly and really to glorify God. God's seeking His glory in respect of us is the flowing forth of His goodness upon us: our seeking the glory of God is our endeavouring to partake more of God, and to resemble Him, as much as we can, in true holiness and every divine virtue. That we are not nicely to distinguish between the glory of God and our own salvation. That salvation is nothing else, for the main, but a true participation of the Divine nature. To love God above ourselves, is not to love Him above the salvation of our souls; but above our particular beings and above our sinful affections, &c. The difference between things that are good relatively, and those that are good absolutely and essentially: that, in our conformity to these, God is most glorified, and we are made most happy.

3. THE *third* property or effect whereby religion discovers its own excellency, is this; *That it directs and enables a man to propound to himself the best end and scope of life, viz. The glory of God, the highest Being, and his own assimilation, or becoming like unto God.*

That Christian in whom religion rules powerfully, is not so low in his ambitions as to pursue any of the things of this world as his ultimate end: his soul is too big for earthly designs and interests; but, understanding himself to come from God, he is continually returning to Him again. It is not worthy of the mind of man to pursue any perfection lower than its own, or to aim at any end more ignoble than itself. There is nothing that more straitens and confines the freeborn soul than the particularity, indigency, and penury of that end which it pursues: when it complies most of all with this lower world, as is well observed by an excellent philosopher;—"the true nobleness and freedom of it is then most disputable," and the title it holds to true liberty becomes most litigious. It never more slides and degenerates from itself, than when it becomes enthralled to some particular interest: as, on the other side, it never acts more freely or fully, than when it extends itself upon the most universal end. Every thing is so much the more noble, "the more remote the ends it has," as was well observed by Cicero. As low ends debase a man's spirit, supplant and rob it of its birthright; so the highest and last end raises and ennobles it, and enlarges it into a more universal and

comprehensive capacity of enjoying that one unbounded goodness, which is God Himself: it makes it spread and dilate itself in the infinite sphere of the Divine Being and blessedness; it makes it live in the fulness of Him that fills all in all.

Every thing is most properly such as the end is which is aimed at: the mind of man is always shaping itself into a conformity, as much as may be, to that which is his end; and the nearer it draws to it in the achievement thereof, the greater likeness it bears to it. There is a plastic virtue, a secret energy, issuing forth from that which the mind propounds to itself as its end, to mould and fashion it according to its own model. The soul is always stamped with the same characters as are engraven upon the end it aims at; and, while it converses with it, and sets itself before it, "it is turned as wax to the seal," to use that phrase in Job. Man's soul conceives all its thoughts and imaginations before his end, as Laban's ewes did their young, before the rods in the watering-troughs. He that pursues any worldly interest or earthly thing as his end, becomes himself also "earthly:" and the more the soul directs itself to God, the more it becomes "godlike," deriving a print of that glory and beauty upon itself with which it converseth, as it is excellently set forth by the apostle: "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." That spirit of ambition and popularity, that so violently

transports the minds of men into a pursuit of vain-glory, makes them as vain as that popular air they live upon: the spirit of this world, that draws forth a man's designs after worldly interests, makes him as unstable, inconstant, tumultuous, and perplexed a thing as the world is. On the contrary, the spirit of true religion, steering and directing the mind and life to God, makes it a uniform, stable, and quiet thing, as God Himself is: it is only true goodness in the soul of man, guiding it steadily and uniformly towards God, directing it and all its actions to the one last end and chief good, that can give it a true consistency and composedness within itself.

All self-seeking and self-love do but imprison the soul, and confine it to its own home: the mind of a good man is too noble, too big for such a particular life; he hath learned to despise his own being, in comparison of that uncreated beauty and goodness, which is so infinitely transcendent to himself or any created thing; he reckons upon his choice and best affections and designs, as too choice and precious a treasure to be spent upon such a poor sorry thing as himself, or upon any thing else but God Himself.

This was the life of Christ, and is, in some degree, the life of every one that partakes of the Spirit of Christ. Such Christians seek not their own glory, but the glory of Him that sent them into this world: they know they were brought forth into this world, not to set up or drive a trade for themselves, but to serve the will and pleasure

of him that made them, and to finish that work he hath appointed them. It were not worth the while to have been born or to live, had it been only for such a penurious end as ourselves are: it is most godlike, and best suits with the spirit of religion, for a Christian to live wholly to God, to live the life of God, "having his own life hid with Christ in God;" and thus, in a sober sense, he becomes deified. This indeed is such a "deification" as is not transacted merely upon the stage of fancy, by arrogance and presumption, but in the highest powers of the soul, by a living and quickening spirit of true religion there, uniting God and the soul together in unity of affections, will, and end.

I should now pass from this to another particular; but because many are apt to misapprehend the notion of God's glory, and flatter themselves with their pretended and imaginary aiming at the glory of God, I think it may be of good use, a little further and more distinctly, to unfold the design that a religious mind pursues, in directing itself and all its actions to God. We are, therefore, to consider, that this doth not consist in some transient thoughts of God and His glory, as the end we propound to ourselves in any undertakings: a man does not direct all his actions to the glory of God by forming a conception in his mind, or stirring up a strong imagination upon any action, that that must be for the glory of God: it is not the thinking of God's glory that is glorifying of Him. As all other parts of religion may be

apishly acted over by fancy and imagination, so also may the internal parts of religion many times be acted over with much seeming grace by our fancy and passions; these often love to be drawing the pictures of religion, and use their best arts to render them more beautiful and pleasing. But though true practical religion derives its force and beauty through all the lower powers of a man's soul, yet hath it not its rise nor throne there: as religion consists not in a form of words which signify nothing, so neither doth it consist in a set of fancies or internal apprehensions. Our Saviour hath best taught what it is to live to God's glory, or to glorify God, *viz.* To be fruitful in all holiness, and to live so as that our lives may shine with His grace spreading itself through our whole man.*

We rather glorify God by entertaining the impressions of His glory upon us, than by communicating any kind of glory to Him. Then does a good man become the tabernacle of God, wherein the divine Shechinah does rest, and which the Divine glory fills, when the frame of his mind and life is wholly according to that idea and pattern which he receives from the mount. We best glorify Him when we grow most like to Him: and we then act most for His glory, when a true spirit of sanctity, justice, meekness, &c. runs through all our actions; when we so live in the world as becomes those that converse

* "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."—John xv. 8.

with the great Mind and Wisdom of the whole world; with that Almighty Spirit that made, supports, and governs all things; with that Being from whence all good flows, and in which there is no spot, stain, or shadow of evil; and so, being captivated and overcome by the sense of the Divine loveliness and goodness, we endeavour to be like Him, and conform ourselves, as much as may be, to Him.

When God seeks His own glory, He does not so much endeavour after anything without Himself. He did not bring this stately fabric of the universe into being, that He might, for such a monument of His mighty power and beneficence, gain some panegyrics or applause from a little of that fading breath which he had made. Neither was that gracious contrivance of restoring lapsed men to Himself a plot to get Himself some eternal hallelujahs, as if He had so ardently thirsted after the lays of glorified spirits, or desired a choir of souls to sing forth His praises. Neither was it to let the world see how magnificent He was. No: it is His own internal glory that He most loves, and the communication thereof which He seeks: as Plato sometimes speaks of the Divine love, it arises not out of indigency, as created love does, but out of fulness and redundancy: it is an overflowing fountain, and that love which descends upon created being is a free efflux from the Almighty source of love: and it is well-pleasing to Him that those creatures which He hath made should partake of it. Though God cannot seek His

own glory so as if He might acquire any addition to Himself, yet He may seek it so as to communicate it out of Himself. It is a good maxim of Plato "that in the Divine Being there is no jealousy," which is better stated by St. James, "God giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." And by that glory of His, which He loves to impart to His creatures, I understand those stamps and impressions of wisdom, justice, patience, mercy, love, peace, joy, and other divine gifts, which He bestows freely upon the minds of men. And thus God triumphs in His own glory, and takes pleasure in the communication of it.

As God's seeking His own glory in respect of us, is most properly the flowing forth of His goodness upon us: so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavouring after a participation of His goodness, and an earnest incessant pursuing after Divine perfection. When God becomes so great in our eyes, and all created things so little, that we reckon upon nothing as worthy of our aims or ambitions, but a serious participation of the Divine nature, and the exercise of Divine virtues, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, and the like; when the soul beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the Divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavours after the greatest resemblance of God in justice, love, and goodness; when, conversing

with Him by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness, and power of His goodness, we endeavour to assimilate ourselves to Him: then we may be said to glorify Him indeed. God seeks no glory but His own; and we have none of our own to give Him. God in all things seeks Himself and His own glory, as finding nothing better than Himself; and when we love Him above all things, and endeavour to be most like Him, we declare plainly that we count nothing better than He is.

I doubt we are too nice logicians sometimes, in distinguishing between the glory of God and our own salvation. We cannot, in a true sense, seek our own salvation more than the glory of God, which triumphs most, and discovers itself most effectually, in the salvation of souls; for, indeed, this salvation is nothing else but a true participation of the Divine nature. Heaven is not a thing without us, nor is happiness anything distinct from a true conjunction of the mind with God in a secret feeling of His goodness, and reciprocation of affection to Him, wherein the Divine glory most unfolds itself. And there is nothing that a soul, touched with any serious sense of God, can more earnestly thirst after, or seek with more strength of affection than this. Then shall we be happy, when God comes to be all in all in us. To love God above ourselves is not, indeed, so properly to love Him above the salvation of our souls, as if these were distinct things; but it is to love Him above all our own sinful affections, and above our particular beings, and to conform ourselves to

Him. And as that which is good relatively, and in order to us, is so much the better, by how much the more it is commensurate and conformed to us: so, on the other side, that which is good absolutely and essentially, requires that our minds and affections should, as far as may be, be commensurate and conformed to it: and herein is God most glorified, and we made happy. As we cannot truly love the first and highest good while we serve a design upon it, and subordinate it to ourselves: so neither is our own salvation consistent with any such sordid, pinching, and particular love. We cannot be completely blessed, till the *idea boni*, or the *ipsum bonum*, which is God, exercise its sovereignty over all the faculties of our souls, rendering them as like to itself as may consist with their proper capacity.*

CHAPTER VI.

The fourth property or effect discovering the excellency of religion, viz. That it begets the greatest serenity and composedness of mind, and brings the truest contentment, the purest and most satisfying joy and pleasure to every holy soul. God, as being that uniform chief good, and the one last end, does attract and fix the soul. Wicked men distracted through a multiplicity of objects and ends. How the restless appetite of our wills after some supreme good leads to the knowledge, as of a Deity, so of the unity of a Deity. How the joys and delights of good men differ from, and far excel, those of the wicked. The constancy

* See also page 61.

and tranquility of the spirits of good men in reference to external troubles. All perturbations of the mind arise from an inward, rather than an outward, cause. The method of the Stoics for attaining ἀταραξία* *and true rest examined, and the insufficiency of it discovered. A further illustration of what has been said concerning the peaceful and happy state of good men, from the contrary state of the wicked.*

4. THE *fourth* property and effect of true religion, wherein it expresseth its own nobleness is this: *That it begets the greatest serenity, constancy, and composedness of mind, and brings the truest contentment, the most satisfying joy and pleasure, the purest and most divine sweetness and pleasure to the spirits of good men.* Every good man, in whom religion rules, is at peace and unity with himself, is as a city compacted together. Grace doth more and more reduce all the faculties of the soul into a perfect subjection and subordination to itself. The union and conjunction of the soul with God, that primitive Unity, is that which is the alone original and fountain of all peace, and the centre of rest: as the further any being slides from God, the more it breaks into discords within itself, as not having any centre within itself, which might collect and unite all the faculties thereof to itself, and so knit them up together in a sweet confederacy amongst themselves. God only is such an Almighty goodness as can attract all the powers in man's soul to itself, as being an object transcendently adequate to the largest capacities of any created being, and so unite man

* Freedom from passion.

perfectly to Himself, in the true enjoyment of one uniform and simple good.

It must be one last end and supreme good that can fix man's mind, which otherwise will be tossed up and down in perpetual uncertainties, and become as many several things, as those poor particularities are which it meets with. A wicked man's life is so distracted by a multiplicity of ends and objects, that it never is, nor can be, consistent with itself, nor continue in any composed, settled frame: it is the most intricate, irregular, and confused thing in the world, no one part of it agreeing with another, because the whole is not firmly knit together, by the power of some one last end running through all. Whereas the life of a good man is under the sweet command of one supreme goodness and last end. This alone is that living form and soul which, running through all the powers of the mind and actions of life, collects all together into one fair and beautiful system, making all that variety conspire into perfect unity; whereas else, all would fall asunder like the members of a dead body, when once the soul is gone, all the little particles flitting each from the rest. It was a good maxim of Pythagoras, quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, Man also ought to become one with himself. A divided mind and a multiform life speak the greatest disparagement that may be: it is only the intermediation of one last end, that can reconcile a man perfectly to himself and his own happiness. This is the best temper and composedness

of the soul, as Plotinus speaks, when by a conjunction with one chief good and last end it is drawn up in a unity and consent with itself; when all the faculties of the soul, with their several issues and motions, though never so many in themselves, like so many lines, meet together, in one and the same centre. It is not one and the same goodness that always actuates the faculties of a wicked man; but as many several images and pictures of goodness as a quick and working fancy can represent to him; which so divide his affections, that he is no one thing within himself, but tossed hither and thither by the most independent principles and imaginations that may be. But a good man hath singled out the supreme goodness, which, by an omnipotent sweetness, draws all his affections after it, and so makes them all, with the greatest complacency, conspire together in the pursuit and embraces of it. Were there not some infinite and self-sufficient goodness, and that perfectly one—Primitive Unity—as Simplicius doth phrase it, man would be a most miserably distracted creature. As the restless appetite within man, after some infinite and sovereign good (without the enjoyment of which it could never be satisfied), does commend unto us the notion of a Deity; so the perpetual distractions and divisions that would arise in the soul upon a plurality of deities, may seem no less to evince the unity of that Deity. Were not this chief good perfectly one, were there any other equal to it, man's soul would hang *in æquilibrio*, equally poised, equally desiring the enjoyment

of both, but moving to neither; like a piece of iron between two loadstones of equal virtue. But when religion enters into the soul, it charms all its restless rage and violent appetite, by discovering to it the universal fountain-fulness of one supreme Almighty goodness; and, leading it out of itself into a conjunction therewith, it lulls it into the most undisturbed rest and quietness in the lap of divine enjoyment; where it meets with full contentment, and rests adequately satisfied in the fruition of the infinite, uniform, and essential goodness and loveliness, the true Absolute Beauty, that is not "beautiful here and not beautiful there, but which is beautiful in every part," as a noble philosopher doth well express it.*

The peace which a religious soul is possessed of, is such a "peace as passeth all understanding:" the joy that it meets with in the ways of holiness is "unspeakable and full of glory." The delights and sweetnesses, that accompany a religious life, are of a purer and more excellent nature than the pleasures of worldly men. The spirit of a good man is too pure and refined a thing than to delight itself in the thick mire of earthly and sensual pleasures, in which carnal men roll and tumble themselves with so much greediness: "He lets not loose his hawk for flight along the dusty ground," as the Arabic proverb hath it. It speaks the degeneration of any soul whatsoever, that it should desire to incorporate itself with

* Simplicius.

any of the gross, dreggy, sensual delights here below. But a soul, purified by religion from all earthly dregs, delights to mingle itself only with things that are most divine and spiritual. There is nothing that can beget any pleasure or sweetness, but in some harmonical faculty which hath some kindred and acquaintance with it. As it is in the senses, so in every other faculty, there is a natural kind of science whereby it can single out its own proper object from every thing else, and is better able to define it to itself than the most exact artist in the world can; and when once it hath found it out, it presently feels itself so perfectly fitted and matched by it, that it dissolves into secret joy and pleasure in the entertainment of it. True delight and joy is begotten by the conjunction of some discerning faculty with its proper object. The proper objects for a mind and spirit are divine and immaterial things, with which it hath the greatest affinity, and therefore triumphs most in its converse with them; as it is well observed by Seneca*; and when it converseth most with these high and noble objects, it behaves itself most gracefully, and lives most becoming itself; and it lives also most deliciously, nor can it any where else be better provided for, or, indeed, fare so well. A good man dis-

* Hoc habet (sc. animus) argumentum divinitatis suæ, quod illum divina delectant, nec ut alienis interest, sed ut suis.—Sen. *Præfat. ad Nat. Quæst.*

dains to be beholden to the wit, or art, or industry of any creature to find him out, and bring him in a constant revenue and maintenance for his joy and pleasure: the language of his heart is that of the Psalmist; "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon me." Religion always carries a sufficient provision of joy and sweetness along with it to maintain itself withal: "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Religion is no sullen stoicism or oppressing melancholy; it is no inthralling tyranny exercised over those noble and vivacious affections of love and delight, as those men that were never acquainted with the life of it may imagine; but it is full of a vigorous and masculine delight and joy, and such as advances and ennobles the soul, and does not weaken or dispirit the life and power of it, as sensual and earthly joys do, when the soul, unacquainted with religion, is enforced to give entertainment to these gross and earthly things, for the want of enjoyment of some better good. The spirit of a good man may justly behave itself with a noble disdain to all terrene pleasures, because it knows where to mend its fare: it is the same Almighty and eternal goodness which is the happiness of God, and of all good men. The truly religious soul affects nothing primarily and fundamentally but God Himself: his contentment, even in the midst of his worldly employments, is in the sun of the divine favour that shines upon him: this is as the manna that lies upon the top of all outward blessings,

which his spirit gathers up and feeds upon with delight. Religion consists not in a toilsome drudgery about some bodily exercises and external performances; nor is it only the spending of ourselves in such attendances upon God, and services to Him, as are only accommodated to this life, though every employment for God is both amiable and honourable: but there is something of our religion that interests us in a present possession of that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory:" which leads us into the porch of heaven, and to the confines of eternity. It sometimes carries up the soul into a mount of transfiguration, or to the top of Pisgah, where it may take a prospect of the promised land, and gives it a map or scheme of its future inheritance: it gives it sometimes some anticipations of blessedness, some foretastes of those joys, those rivers of pleasure which run at God's right hand for evermore.

I might further add, as a *mantissa* to this present argument, the tranquillity and composedness of a good man's spirit in reference to all external molestations. Religion, having made a thorough pacification of the soul within itself, renders it impregnable to all outward assaults; so that it is at rest, and lives securely in the midst of all those boisterous storms and tempests, which make such violent impressions upon the spirits of wicked men. Here, the Stoics have stated the case aright, that all perturbations of the mind arise not properly from an outward but an inward cause: it is not an outward evil, but

an inward imagination, bred in the womb of the soul itself, that molests and grieves it. The more the soul is restored to itself, and lives at the height of its own being, the more easily may it disdain and despise any design or combination against it by the most blustering giants in the world. A Christian that enjoys himself in God, will not be beholden to the world's fair and gentle usage, for the composedness of his mind; no: he enjoys that peace and tranquillity within himself, which no creature can bestow upon him, or take from him.

But the Stoics were not so happy in their notions about the way to true rest and composedness of spirit. It is not (by their leave) the soul's collecting and gathering up itself within the circumference of its own essence; nor is it a rigid restraining and keeping in its own issues and motions within the confines of its own natural endowments, which is able to confer upon it that freedom from passion and composedness of mind, which they so much idolize, as the supreme and only bliss of man, and render it free from all kind of perturbations: for, by what we find in Seneca and others, it appears that the Stoics, seeking an autarchy within themselves, and being loth to be beholden to God for their happiness, but that each of them might be as God, self-sufficient, and happy in the enjoyment of himself, endeavoured, by their sour doctrine and a rigid discipline over their souls, their severities against passions and all those restless motions in the soul after some higher good, to attain a complete

tranquillity, and a full contentment within themselves. But herein, they missed the true method of finding rest to themselves, it being the union of the soul with God, that uniform, simple, and unbounded good, which is the sole original of all true, inward peace. Neither were it a happiness worth the having, for a mind, like a hermit sequestered from all things else, by a recession into itself, to spend an eternity in self-converse, and the enjoyment of such a diminutive, superficial, nothing as itself is, and must necessarily be to itself. It is only peculiar to God to be happy in Himself alone; and God, who has been more liberal in His provisions for man, hath created in man such a spring of restless motion, that, with the greatest impatience, forceth him out of himself, and violently tosseth him to and fro, till he come to fix himself upon some solid and self-subsistent goodness. Could a man find himself withdrawn from all terrene and material things, and perfectly retired into himself; were the whole world so quiet and calm about him, as not to offer to make the least attempt upon the composedness and constancy of his mind; might he be so well entertained at his own home, as to find no frowns, no sour looks from his own conscience; might he have that security from heaven, that God would not disquiet his fancied tranquillity, by imbittering his thoughts with any dreadful apprehensions; yet he should find something within him that would not let him be at rest, but would rend him from himself, and toss him from his own

foundation and consistency. There is an insatiable appetite in the soul of man, like a greedy lion hunting after his prey, that would render him impatient of his own pinching penury, and could never satisfy itself with such a thin and spare diet as he finds at home. There are two principal faculties in the soul which, like two daughters of the horseleech, are always crying, Give, give: these are those hungry vultures which, if they cannot find their prey abroad, return and gnaw the soul itself; "where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." By this, we may see how unavailable to the attaining of true rest and peace that conceit of the Stoics was, who supposed the only way and method hereto was this, to confine the soul thus monastically to its own home. We read in the gospel of such a question of our Saviour's: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" we may invert it: "What do you return within to see? A soul confined within the private and narrow cell of its own particular being?" Such a soul deprives itself of all that Almighty, and essential glory and goodness which shines round about it, which spreads itself through the whole universe—I say, it deprives itself of all this, for the enjoying of such a poor, petty, and diminutive thing as itself is, which yet it can never enjoy truly in such a retiredness.

We have seen the peaceful and happy state of the truly religious: but it is otherwise with wicked and irreligious men. "There is no peace to the wicked; but

they are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" as it is expressed by the prophet Isaiah. The mind of a wicked man is like the sea, when it roars and rages through the striving of several contrary winds upon it. Furious lusts and wild passions within, as they war against heaven and the more noble and divine part of the soul, so do they war amongst themselves, maintaining perpetual contests, and contending which shall be the greatest: *scelera dissident.* These, indeed, are the Cadmus-brood rising out of the serpent's teeth, ready armed one against another; whence it is that the soul of a wicked man becomes a very uninhabitable and incommodious place to itself, full of disquietude and trouble, through the many contests and civil commotions maintained within it. The minds of wicked men are like those disconsolate and desolate spirits which our Saviour speaks of, which, being cast out of their habitation, wander up and down through dry and desert places, seeking rest but finding none. The soul that finds not some solid and self-sufficient good to centre itself upon, is a boisterous and restless thing; and, being without God, it wanders up and down the world, destitute, afflicted, tormented with vehement hunger and thirst after some satisfying good; and, as any one shall bring it tidings, "Lo here, or, Lo there is good," it presently goes out towards it, and, with a swift and speedy flight, hastens after it. The sense of an inward indigency doth stimulate and enforce it to seek its contentment without itself, and so it

wanders up and down from one creature to another; and thus becomes distracted by a multiplicity of objects. And while it cannot find some one and only object upon which, as being perfectly adequate to its capacities, it may wholly bestow itself; while it is tossed with restless and vehement motions of desire and love, through a world of painted beauties, false, glozing excellencies; courting all, but matching nowhere; violently hurried everywhere, but finding nowhere *objectum par amori;* while it converseth only with these pinching particularities here below, and is not yet acquainted with the universal goodness; it is certainly far from true rest and satisfaction, from a fixed, composed temper of spirit; but being distracted by multiplicity of objects and ends, there can never be any firm and stable peace or friendship at home, amongst all its powers and faculties; nor can there be a firm amity and friendship abroad betwixt wicked men themselves, as Aristotle concludes in his Ethics, because all vice is so multiform and inconsistent a thing; and so there can be no true concatenation of affections and ends between them. Whereas, in all good men, virtue and goodness is one form and soul to them all, that unites them together, and there is the one, simple, and uniform good, that guides and governs them all. They are not as a ship, tossed in the tumultuous ocean of this world, without any compass at all to steer by; but they direct their course by the certain guidance of the one last end, as the true pole-star of all their motion. But while the soul

lies benighted in a thick ignorance, as it is with wicked men, and beholds not some stable and eternal good towards which it may move; though it may, by the strength of that principle of activeness within itself, spend itself perpetually with swift and giddy motions; yet will it be always contesting with secret disturbances, and cannot act but with many reluctancies, as not finding an object equal to the force and strength of its vast affections to act upon.

By what hath been said, may appear the vast difference between the ways of sin and of holiness. Inward distractions and disturbances, "tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil: but to every man that worketh good, glory, honour, and peace," inward composedness and tranquillity of spirit, pure and divine joys, far excelling all sensual pleasures; in a word, true contentment of spirit, and full satisfaction in God, whom the pious soul loves above all things, and longs still after a nearer enjoyment of Him. I shall conclude this particular with that with which Plotinus concludes his book —That the life of holy and divine men is "a life not touched with these vanishing delights of time, but a flight of the soul alone to God."

CHAPTER VII.

The fifth property or effect discovering the excellency of religion, viz. That it advanceth the soul to a holy boldness and humble familiarity with God, and to a comfortable confidence concerning the love of God toward it, and its own salvation. Fearfulness, consternation of mind, and frightful passions, are consequent upon sin and guilt. These, together with the most dismal deportments of trembling and amazement, are agreeable to the nature of the devil, who delights to be served in this manner by his worshippers. Love, joy, and hope, are most agreeable to the nature of God, and most pleasing to Him. The right apprehensions of God are such as are apt to beget love to God, delight and confidence in Him. A true Christian is more for a solid and well-grounded peace, than for high raptures and feelings of joy. How a Christian should endeavour after the assurance of his salvation. That he should not importunately expect or desire some extraordinary manifestations of God to him, but rather look after the manifestation of the life of God within him, the foundation or beginning of heaven and salvation in his own soul. That self-resignation, and the subduing of our own wills, are greatly available to obtain assurance. The vanity and absurdity of that opinion, viz. That in a perfect resignation of our wills to God's will, a man should be content with his own damnation, and to be the subject of eternal wrath in hell, if it should so please God.

5. THE *fifth* property or effect, whereby true religion discovers its own nobleness and excellency, is this; *That it advanceth the soul to a holy boldness and humble familiarity with God, as also a well-grounded hope, and comfortable confidence, concerning the love of God toward it, and its own salvation.* The truly religious soul maintains a humble and sweet familiarity with God; and, with great alacrity of spirit, without any consternation and

servility of spirit, is enabled to look upon the glory and majesty of the Most High: but sin and wickedness is pregnant with fearfulness and horror. That trembling and consternation of mind which possesses wicked men, is nothing else but the offspring of darkness, an Empusa* begotten in corrupt and irreligious hearts. While men "walk in darkness," and "are of the night," as the apostle speaks, then only is it that they are vexed with those ugly and ghastly monsters that terrify and torment them. But when once the day breaks, and true religion opens herself upon the soul, like the eyelids of the morning, then all those shadows and frightful apparitions flee away. As all light, and love, and joy, descend from above, from the Father of Lights; so all darkness, and fearfulness, and despair, are from below: they arise from corrupt and earthly minds, and are like those gross vapours arising from this earthly globe, that, not being able to get up towards heaven, spread themselves about the circumference of that body where they were first begotten, infesting it with darkness, and generating into thunder and lightning, clouds and tempests. But the higher a Christian ascends above this dark dungeon of the body; the more that religion prevails within him, the more then shall he find himself, as it were, in a clear heaven, in a region that is calm and serene; and the more will those

* A frightful monster supposed to be capable of assuming various shapes, and to be sent by Hecate.

black and dark affections of fear and despair vanish away, and those clear and bright affections of love, and joy, and hope, break forth in their strength and lustre.

The devil, who is the prince of darkness and the great tyrant, delights to be served with ghastly affections, and the most dismal deportments of trembling and astonishment; as having nothing at all of amiableness or excellency in him to commend himself to his worshippers. Slavery and servility (that "coffin of the soul" as Longinus truly calls it) is the badge and livery of the devil's religion: hence those "dreadful rites" of the heathens, performed with much trembling and horror. But God, who is the supreme goodness, and both essential love and loveliness, takes most pleasure in those sweet and delightful affections of the soul, *viz.* love, joy, and hope, which are most correspondent to His own nature. The ancient superstition of the heathens was always very nice and curious, in honouring every one of their gods with sacrifices and rites most agreeable to their natures: I am sure there is no incense, no offering which we can present to God, so sweet, so acceptable to Him as our love, and delight, and confidence in Him; and when He comes into the souls of men, He makes these His throne, His place of rest, as finding the greatest agreeableness therein to His own essence. A good man, that finds himself made partaker of the Divine nature, and transformed into the image of God, infinitely takes pleasure in God, as being according to that in Canticles, "al-

together lovely," and his "meditation of God is sweet unto him." St. John, that lay in the bosom of Christ, who came from the bosom of the Father, and perfectly understood His eternal essence, hath given us the fullest description that He could make of Him, when he tells us that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love;" and, reposing himself in the bosom of an Almighty goodness, where he finds nothing but love and loveliness, he now displays all the strength and beauty of those his choicest and most precious affections of love, and joy, and confidence: his soul is now at ease, and rests in peace, neither is there anything to make afraid: he is got beyond all those powers of darkness which give such continual alarms in this lower world, and are always troubling the earth: he is got above all fears and despairs: he is in a bright, clear region, above clouds and tempests: and "looks down upon the clouds beneath." There is no frightful terribleness in the supreme Majesty. That we apprehend God at any time in such a dismayed manner, must not at all be made an argument of His nature, but of our sinfulness and weakness. The sun in the heavens always was, and always will be, a globe of light and brightness, howsoever a purblind eye is rather dazzled than enlightened by it. There is an inward sense in man's soul, which, were it once awakened and excited with an inward taste and relish of the Divinity, could better define God to him than all the world else. It is the sincere Christian that

so tastes and sees how good and sweet the Lord is, as none else does: "The God of hope fills him with all joy and peace in believing," so that he "abounds in hope," as the apostle speaks. He quietly reposes himself in God; "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;" he is more for a solid peace, and settled calm of spirit, than for high raptures and feelings of joy, or extraordinary manifestations of God to him; he does not passionately desire, nor importunately expect such things; he rather looks after the manifestations of the goodness and power of God within him, in subduing all in his soul that is unlike and contrary to God, and forming him into His image and likeness.

Though I think it worthy of a Christian to endeavour after the assurance of his own salvation; yet, perhaps, it might be the safest way to moderate his curiosity of prying into God's book of life, and to stay a while until he sees himself within the confines of salvation itself. Should a man hear a voice from heaven, or see a vision from the Almighty, to testify unto him the love of God towards him; yet, methinks, it were more desirable to find a revelation of all from within, arising up from the bottom and centre of a man's own soul, in the real and internal impressions of a godlike nature upon his own spirit; and thus to find the foundation and beginning of heaven and happiness within himself: it were more desirable to see the crucifying of our own will, the mortifying of the mere animal life, and to see a Divine life

rising up in the room of it, as a sure pledge and inchoation of immortality and happiness, the very essence of which consists in a perfect conformity, and cheerful compliance of all the powers of our souls, with the will of God.

The best way of gaining a well-grounded assurance of the Divine love is this—for a man to overcome himself and his own will: "To him that overcometh shall be given that white stone, and in it the new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it." He that beholds the Sun of Righteousness arising in the horizon of his soul with healing in its wings, and chasing away all that misty darkness of his own self-will and passions; such a one desires not now the star-light to know whether it be day or not, nor cares he to pry into heaven's secrets, and to search into the hidden rolls of eternity, there to see the whole plot of his salvation; for he views it transacted upon the inward stage of his own soul, and, reflecting upon himself, he may behold a heaven opened from within, and a throne set up in his soul, and an Almighty Saviour sitting upon it, and reigning within him: he now finds the kingdom of heaven within him, and sees that it is not a thing merely reserved for him without him, being already made partaker of the sweetness and efficacy of it. What the Jews say of the Spirit of Prophecy, may not unfitly be applied to the Holy Ghost, the true Comforter, dwelling in the minds of good men, as a sure earnest of their eternal inheritance; "The Spirit resides not but upon a man of fortitude"—one that gives proof

of this fortitude in subduing his own self-will and his affections. We read of Elisha, that he was fain to call for a musical instrument, and one to play before him, to allay the heat of his passions, before he could converse with the prophetical spirit. The Holy Spirit is too pure and gentle a thing to dwell in a mind muddied and disturbed by those impure dregs, those thick fogs and mists that arise from our self-will and passions: our prevailing over these is the best way to cherish the Holy Spirit, by which we may be sealed unto the day of redemption.

To conclude this particular. It is a venturous and rugged guess and conceit which some men have, that in a perfect resignation of our wills to the Divine will, a man should be content with his own damnation, and to be the subject of eternal wrath in hell, if it should so please God: which is as impossible as it is for him that infinitely thirsts after a true participation of the Divine nature, and most earnestly endeavours after a most inward union with God in spirit, by a denial of himself and his own will, to swell up in self-love, pride, and arrogancy against God; the one whereof is the most substantial heaven, the other the most real hell; whereas, indeed, by conquering ourselves, we are translated from death to life, and the kingdom of God and Heaven is already come into us.

CHAPTER VIII.

The sixth property or effect discovering the excellency of religion, viz. That it spiritualizes material things, and carries up the souls of good men from sensible and earthly things, to things intellectual and divine. There are lesser and fuller representations of God in the creatures. To converse with God in the creation, and to pass out of the sensible world into the intellectual, is most effectually taught by religion. Wicked men converse not with God, as shining out in the creatures; they converse with them in a sensual and unspiritual manner. Religion does spiritualize the creation to good men: it teaches them to look at any perfections or excellencies in themselves and others, not so much as theirs or others, but as so many beams flowing from one and the same fountain of light; to love them all in God, and God in all—the universal goodness in a particular being. A good man enjoys and delights in whatsoever good he sees otherwhere, as if it were his own: he does not fondly love and esteem either himself or others. The divine temper and strain of the ancient philosophy.

6. THE *sixth* property or effect, wherein religion discovers its own excellency, is this, ***That it spiritualizes material things, and so carries up the souls of good men from earthly things to things divine, from this sensible world to the intellectual***

God made the universe and all the creatures contained therein, as so many glasses wherein He might reflect His own glory: He hath copied forth Himself in the creation; and, in this outward world, we may read the lovely characters of the Divine goodness, power, and wisdom. In some creatures, there are darker representations of God; there are the prints and footsteps of God, but in others,

there are clearer and fuller representations of the Divinity, the face and image of God; according to that known saying of the schoolmen, "the more remote resemblances which a creature bears to God, are called His foot-prints; its closer His very image." But how to find God here, and feelingly to converse with Him, and, being affected with the sense of the Divine glory shining out upon the creation, how to pass out of the sensible world into the intellectual, is not so effectually taught by that philosophy which professed it most, as by true religion: that which knits and unites God and the soul together, can best teach it how to ascend and descend upon those golden links that unite, as it were, the world to God. That Divine wisdom that contrived and beautified this glorious structure, can best explain her own art, and carry up the soul back again, in these reflected beams, to Him who is the fountain of them. Though good men, all of them, are not acquainted with all those philosophical notions touching the relation between created and the uncreated being; yet may they easily find every creature pointing out to that Being, whose image and superscription it bears, and climb up from those darker resemblances of the Divine wisdom and goodness, shining out in different degrees upon several creatures, as the ancients speak, till they sweetly repose themselves in the bosoms of the Divinity: and, while they are thus conversing with this lower world, and are viewing "the invisible things of God in the things that are made," in this visible and

outward creation they find God, many times, secretly flowing into their souls, and leading them silently out of the court of the temple into the holy place. But it is otherwise with wicked men. They dwell perpetually upon the dark side of the creatures, and converse with these things only in a gross, sensual, earthly, and unspiritual manner: they are so encompassed with the thick and foggy mist of their own corruptions, that they cannot see God there, where He is most visible: "the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not:" their souls are so deeply sunk into that house of clay which they carry about with them, that were there nothing of body or bulky matter before them, they could find nothing to exercise themselves about.

But religion, where it is in truth and in power, renews the very spirit of our minds, and doth, in a manner, spiritualize this outward creation to us, and doth, in a more excellent way, perform that which the Peripatetics are wont to affirm of their *intellectus agens*, in purging bodily and material things from the feculency and dregs of matter, and separating them from those circumstantiating and straitening conditions of time aud place, and the like; and teaches the soul to look at those perfections which it finds here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that body, as they adorn this or that particular being, but as they are so many rays issuing forth from that first and essential perfection, in which they all meet, and embrace one another in the most close friendship.

Every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness; every created excellency is a beam descending from the Father of Lights : and, should we separate all these particularities from God, all affection spent upon them would be unchaste, and their embraces adulterous. We should love all things in God, and God in all things, because He is all in all, the beginning and original of being, the perfect idea of their goodness, and the end of their motion. It is nothing but a thick mist of pride and self-love that hinders men's eyes from beholding that sun which both enlightens them and all things else ; but when true religion begins once to dawn upon men's souls, and, with its shining light, chases away their black night of ignorance ; then they behold themselves and all things else enlightened, though in a different way, by one and the same sun, and all the powers of their souls fall down before God, and ascribe all glory to Him. Now it is that a good man is no more solicitous "whether this or that good thing be *mine*, or whether *my* perfections exceed the measure of *this* or *that* particular creature;" for whatsoever good he beholds anywhere, he enjoys and delights in it as much as if it were his own, and whatever he beholds in himself, he looks not upon it as his property, but as a common good ; for all these beams come from one and the same fountain and ocean of light, in whom he loves them all with a universal love : when his affections run along the stream of any created excellencies, whether his own or any one's else, yet they stay not here, but run on till they

fall into the ocean: they do not settle into a fond love and admiration, either of his own or any other's excellencies, but he regards them as so many pure effluxes and emanations from God, and, in a particular being, loves the universal goodness.*

Thus may a good man walk up and down the world as in a garden of spices, and suck a divine sweetness out of every flower. There is a twofold meaning in every creature, as the Jews speak of their law—a literal and a mystical—and the one is but the ground of the other; and, as they say of divers pieces of their law, so a good man says of everything that his senses offer to him—it speaks to his lower part, but it points out something above to his mind and spirit. It is the drowsy and muddy spirit of superstition which, being lulled asleep in the lap of worldly delights, is fain to set some idol at its elbow, something that may jog it, and put it in mind of God. Whereas, true religion never finds itself out of the infinite sphere of the Divinity, and wherever it finds beauty, harmony, goodness, love, ingenuousness, wisdom, holiness, justice, and the like, it is ready to say, here, and there is God: wheresoever any such perfections shine out, a holy mind climbs up by these sunbeams, and raises itself up to God.

And seeing God hath never thrown the world from

* Si sciretur a me veritas, sciretur etiam me illud non esse, aut illud non esse meum, nec a me.

Himself, but runs through all created essence, containing the archetypal ideas of all things in Himself, and from thence deriving and imparting several prints of beauty and excellency all the world over; a soul that is truly godlike, a mind that is enlightened from the same fountain, and hath its inward senses affected with the sweet relishes of divine goodness, cannot but everywhere behold itself in the midst of that glorious, unbounded Being who is indivisibly everywhere. A good man finds every place he treads upon holy ground; to him the world is God's temple; he is ready to say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God."

To conclude. It was a degenerate and unworthy spirit in that philosophy which first separated and made such distances between metaphysical truths and the truths of nature; whereas, the first and most ancient wisdom amongst the heathens was indeed a philosophical divinity, or a divine philosophy, which continued for divers ages; but, as men grew worse, their queasy stomachs began to loathe it: which made the truly wise Socrates complain of the sophists of that age, who began now to corrupt and debase it; whereas heretofore the spirit of philosophy was more generous and divine, and did more purify and ennoble the souls of men, commending intellectual things to them, and taking them off from settling upon sensible and material things here below, and still exciting them to endeavour after the nearest resemblance to God, the su-

preme goodness and loveliness, and an intimate conjunction with Him; which, according to the strain of that philosophy, was the true happiness of immortal souls.

CHAPTER IX.

The seventh and last property or effect discovering the excellency of religion, viz. That it raiseth the minds of good men to a due observance of, and attendance upon Divine Providence, and enables them to serve the will of God, and to acquiesce in it. For a man to serve Providence and the will of God entirely, to work with God, and to bring himself, and all his actions, into a compliance with God's will, His ends and designs, is an argument of the truest nobleness of spirit; it is the most excellent and divine life; and it is most for man's advantage. How the consideration of Divine Providence is the way to inward quietness and establishment of spirit. How wicked men carry themselves unbecomingly through their impatience and fretfulness under the disposals of Providence. The beauty and harmony of the various methods of Providence.

7. THE *seventh* and last property or effect wherein true religion expresseth its own nobleness and excellency, is this, *That it raiseth the minds of good men to a due observance of, and attendance upon, Divine Providence, and enables them to serve the will of God, and to acquiesce in it.* Wheresoever God hath a tongue to speak, there they have ears to hear; and being attentive to God in the soft and still motions of Providence, they are ready to obey His call, and to say with Isaiah, "Behold, here am I; send me." They endeavour to copy forth that lesson

which Christ hath set Christians, seriously considering how that they came into this world by God's appointment, not to do their own wills, but the will of Him that sent them.

As this consideration quiets the spirit of a good man, who is no idle spectator of Providence, and keeps him in a calm and sober temper, in the midst of all storms and tempests; so, it makes him most freely to engage himself in the service of Providence, without any inward reluctancy or disturbance. He cannot be content that Providence should make use of him, as it doth even of those things that understand it least; but it is his holy ambition to serve it. It is nothing but hellish pride and self-love that makes men serve themselves, and so set up themselves as idols against God: but it is, indeed, an argument of true nobleness of spirit for a man to view himself, not in the narrow point of his own being, but in the unbounded essence of the First Cause, so as to be wholly of the highest, and to live only as an instrument in the hands of God, who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. "I should desire to be to God what my hand is to me," was the expression of a holy soul.

To a good man, to serve the will of God, is in the truest and best sense to serve himself, who knows himself to be nothing without or in opposition to God: "the less a man claims to be anything himself the nobler, purer, and more divine he becomes." This is the most divine life that can be, for a man to act

in the world upon eternal designs, and to be so wholly devoted to the will of God, as to serve it most faithfully and entirely. This, indeed, bestows a kind of immortality upon these flitting and transient acts of ours, which, in themselves, are but the offspring of a moment. A pillar or a verse is a poor, sorry monument of any exploit, which yet may well enough become the highest of the world's bravery. But good men, while they work with God, and endeavour to bring themselves, and all their actions, to a unity with God, His ends and designs, enrol themselves in eternity. This is the proper character of holy souls: their wills are so fully resolved into the Divine will, that they in all things subscribe to it without any murmurings or debates: they rest well satisfied with, and take complacency in, any passages of Divine dispensation, as being ordered and disposed by a mind and wisdom above, according to the highest rules of goodness.

The best way for a man rightly to enjoy himself, is, to maintain a universal, ready, and cheerful compliance with the divine and uncreated will in all things; as knowing that nothing can issue and flow forth from the Fountain of goodness but that which is good: and, therefore, a good man is never offended with any piece of Divine dispensation, nor hath he any reluctancy against that will, that dictates and determines all things by an eternal rule of goodness; as knowing that there is an unbounded and Almighty love, that, without any disdain or envy, freely

communicates itself to everything He made; that feeds even the young ravens that call upon Him; that makes His sun to shine, and His rain to fall, both upon the just and unjust; that always infolds those in His everlasting arms, who are made partakers of His own image, perpetually nourishing and cherishing them with the fresh and vital influences of His grace: as knowing also, that there is an all-seeing eye, an unbounded mind and understanding, that derives itself through the whole universe, and, sitting in all the wheels of motion, guides them all, and powerfully governs the most eccentrical motions of creatures, and carries them all most harmoniously in their several orbs to one last end. Who then shall give law to God? "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" Where is he that would climb up into the great consistory in heaven, and, sitting in consultation with the Almighty, instruct the infinite and incomprehensible Wisdom? Shall vain man be wiser than his Maker? This is the hellish temper of wicked men: they examine and judge of all things by the line and measure of their own self-will, their own opinions and designs; and, measuring all things by a crooked rule, they think nothing to be straight; and, therefore, they fall out with God, and with restless impatience fret and vex themselves: and this fretfulness and impatiency in wicked men, argues a breach in the just and due constitution of their minds and spirits.

But a good man, whose soul is restored to that frame

and constitution in which it should be, has better apprehensions of the ways and works of God, and is better affected under the various disposals of Providence. Indeed, to a superficial observer of Divine Providence, many things there are that seem to be nothing else but digressions from the main end of all, and to come to pass by a fortuitous concourse of circumstances; that come in so abruptly, and without any concatenation, or dependence one upon another, as if they were without any mind or understanding to guide them. But a wise man that looks from the beginning to the end of things, beholds them all in their due place and method, acting that part which the supreme Mind and Wisdom, that governs all things, hath appointed them; and carrying on one and the same eternal design, while they move according to their own proper inclinations and measures, and aim at their own particular ends. It were not worth the while to live in a world "devoid of God and Providence," as it was well observed by the Stoic: and to be subservient unto Providence, is the holy ambition and great endeavour of a good man, who is so perfectly overpowered with the love of the universal and infinite goodness, that he would not serve any particular good whatsoever; no, not himself, so as to set up in the world and trade for himself, as the men of this world do, who are "lovers of their own selves, and lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

CHAPTER X.

4. The excellency of religion in regard of its progress, as it is perpetually carrying on the soul towards perfection. Every nature hath its proper centre to which it hastens. Sin and wickedness is within the attractive power of hell, and hastens thither: grace and holiness is within the central force of heaven, and moves thither. It is not the speculation of heaven, as a thing to come, that satisfies the desires of religious souls, but the real possession of it, even in this life. Men are apt to seek after assurance of heaven as a thing to come, rather than after heaven itself, and the inward possession of it here. How the assurance of heaven rises from the growth of holiness, and the powerful progress of religion in our souls. That we are not hastily to believe that we are Christ's, or that Christ is in us. That the works which Christ does in holy souls testify of Him, and best evidence Christ's spiritual appearance in them.

WE have considered the excellency of true religion, 1. In regard of its descent and original; 2. In regard of its nature; 3. In regard of its properties and effects. We proceed now to a fourth particular, and shall show,

4. That religion is a generous and noble thing in regard of its progress: it is perpetually carrying on that mind, in which it is once seated, toward perfection. Though the first appearance of it, upon the souls of good men, may be but as the wings of the morning spreading themselves upon the mountains, yet is it still rising higher and higher upon them, chasing away all the filthy mists and vapours of sin and wickedness before it, till it arrives

at its meridian altitude.* There is the strength and force of the Divinity in it; and though, when it first enters into the minds of men, it may seem to be "sown in weakness," yet will it raise itself in power. As Christ was in His bodily appearance, still increasing in wisdom, and knowledge, and favour with God and man, until He was perfected in glory; so is He also in His spiritual appearance in the souls of men; and, accordingly, the New Testament does more than once distinguish between Christ in His several ages and degrees of growth in the souls of all true Christians. Good men are always "walking on from strength to strength, till at last they see God in Zion." Religion, though it hath its infancy, yet hath it no old age: while it is in its minority, it is always *in motu;* but when it comes to its maturity and full age, it will always be *in quiete*—it is then "always the same, and its years fail not, but it shall endure for ever." Holy and religious souls, being once touched with an inward sense of Divine beauty and goodness, by a strong impress upon them are moved swiftly after God, and, as the apostle expresses himself, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" that so they may "attain to the resurrection of the dead."

* "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. iv. 18.

Where a spirit of religion is, there is the central force of heaven itself, quickening and enlivening those that are informed by it, in their motions toward heaven. As, on the other side, all unhallowed and defiled minds are within the attractive power of hell, and are continually hastening their course thither, being strongly pressed down by the weight of their wickedness. As Plutarch hath well observed—"Every nature, in this world, hath some proper centre to which it is always hastening." Sin and wickedness do not hover a little over the bottomless pit of hell, and only flutter about it; but it is continually sinking lower and lower into it. Neither does true grace make some feeble assays toward heaven, but, by a mighty energy within itself, it is always soaring up higher and higher into heaven. A good Christian does not only court his happiness, and cast now and then a smile upon it, or satisfy himself merely to be contracted to it; but, with the greatest ardours of love and desire, he pursues the solemnity of the just nuptials, that he may be wedded to it, and made one with it. It is not an airy speculation of heaven as a thing (though never so undoubtedly) to come, that can satisfy his hungry desires, but the real possession of it even in this life.* Such a happiness would be less in the esteem of good men, that

* So we read John vi. 54, "*hath* eternal life;" and 1 John v. 11, 13.

were only good to be enjoyed at the end of this life, when all other enjoyments fail him.

I wish there be not, among some, such a light and poor esteem of heaven, as makes them more to seek after assurance of heaven only in the idea of it as a thing to come, than after heaven itself; which, indeed, we can never well be assured of, until we find it rising up within ourselves, and glorifying our own souls. When true assurance comes, heaven itself will appear upon the horizon of our souls, like a morning light, chasing away all our dark and gloomy doubtings before it. We shall not need then to light up our candles to seek for it in corners; no: it will display its own lustre and brightness so before us, that we may see it in its own light, and ourselves the true possessors of it. We may be too nice and vain in seeking for signs and tokens of Christ's spiritual appearances in the souls of men, as well as the Scribes and Pharisees were in seeking for them at His first appearance in the world. When He comes into us, let us expect till the works that He shall do within us may testify of Him; and be not over credulous, till we find that He doth those works there which none other could do. As for a true, well-grounded, assurance, say not so much, "Who shall ascend up into heaven," to fetch it down from thence? or, "who shall descend into the deep," to fetch it up from beneath? for in the growth of true internal goodness, and in the progress of true religion it will freely unfold itself within us. Stay till the

grain of mustard-seed itself breaks forth from among the clods that buried it; till, through the descent of the heavenly dew, it sprouts up, and discovers itself openly. This holy assurance is, indeed, the budding and blossoming of felicity in our own souls; it is the inward sense and feeling of the true life, spirit, sweetness, and beauty of grace, powerfully expressing its own energy within us.

Briefly: true religion, in the progress of it, transforms those minds in which it reigns, from glory to glory: it goes on and prospers in bringing all enemies in subjection under their feet, in reconciling the minds of men fully to God; and it instates them in a firm possession of the supreme good. This is the seed of God within holy souls, which is always warring against the seed of the serpent, till it prevail over it, through the divine strength and influence. Though hell may open her mouth wide and without measure, yet a true Christian, in whom the seed of God remaineth, is in a good and safe condition: he finds himself borne up by an Almighty arm, and carried upwards as upon eagle's wings; and the evil one hath no power over him; or, as St. John expresseth it, "the evil one toucheth him not."

CHAPTER XI.

5. The excellency of religion in regard of its term and end, viz. Perfect blessedness. How unable we are, in this state, to comprehend and describe the full and perfect state of happiness and glory to come. The more godlike a Christian is, the better may he understand that state. Holiness and happiness not two distinct things, but two several notions of one and the same thing. Heaven cannot so well be defined by any thing without us, as by something within us. The great nearness and affinity between sin and hell. The conclusion of this treatise, containing a serious exhortation to a diligent minding of religion, with a discovery of the vanity of those pretences which keep men off from minding religion.

5. WE come now to the *fifth* and last particular, *viz. The excellency of religion in the term and end of it, which is nothing else but blessedness itself in its full maturity.* Which yet I may not here undertake to explain, for it is altogether unutterable, nor can it descend so low as to accommodate itself to any human style. Accordingly, St. John tells us, "it does not yet appear what we shall be;" and yet, that he may give us some glimpse of it, he directs us to God, and tells us, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Indeed, the best way to get a discovery of it, is to endeavour, as much as may be, to be godlike, to live in a feeling converse with God, and in a powerful exercise and expression of all godlike dispositions: so shall our inner man be best enabled "to know the breadth and length, the depth and height, of

that love and goodness which yet passeth all knowledge." There is a state of perfection in the life to come, so far transcendent to any in this life, as that we are not able, from hence, to take the just proportions of it, or to form a full and comprehensive notion of it. We are unable to comprehend the vastness and fulness of that happiness, to which the most purified souls may be raised, or to apprehend how far the mighty power and strength of the Divinity, deriving itself into created being, may communicate a more transcendent life and blessedness to it. We know not what latent powers our souls may here contain within themselves, which then may begin to open and dilate themselves, to let in the full streams of the Divine goodness, when they come nearly and intimately to converse with it; or how blessedness may act upon those faculties of our minds which we now have. We know not what illapses and irradiations there may be from God upon souls in glory, that may raise them into a state of perfection, surpassing all our imaginations.

As for corporeal happiness, there cannot be anything further added to the pleasure of our bodies or animal part, than a restoring of it from disturbing passion and pain, to its just and natural constitution; and therefore, some philosophers have well disputed against the opinion of the Epicureans, who make happiness to consist in bodily pleasure, that it is always preceded by many pains, and when the molestation is gone, and the just constitution of nature recovered, pleasure ceaseth. But the highest pleasure

of minds and spirits does not only consist in the relieving of them from any antecedent pains or grief, or in a relaxation from some former molesting passion: neither is their happiness a mere Stoical calmness as the happiness of the Deity is not a mere negative thing, rendering it free from all disturbance or molestation, so that it may eternally rest quiet within itself: it does not so much consist *in quiete*, as *in actu et vigore*. A mind and spirit is too full of activity and energy, is too quick and potent a thing, to enjoy a full and complete happiness in a mere cessation; this were to make happiness a heavy, spiritless thing. The philosopher hath well observed, that there is infinite power and strength in divine joy, pleasure, and happiness, commensurate with that Almighty Being and Goodness, who is the eternal source of it.*

As created beings, that are capable of conversing with God, stand nearer to God, or further off from Him; and as they partake more or less of His likeness, so they partake more or less of that happiness which flows forth from Him, and God communicates Himself in different degrees to them. There may be as many degrees of sanctity and perfection, as there are of states and conditions of creatures: and that is properly sanctity, which guides and orders all the faculties and actions of any creature, in a way suitable and correspondent to that rank and state in

* Simplicius.

which God hath placed it: and, while it doth so, it admits no sin or defilement to itself, though yet it may be elevated and advanced higher; and, accordingly, true positive sanctity comes to be advanced higher and higher, as any creature comes more to partake of the life of God, and to be brought into a nearer conjunction with God; and so the sanctity and happiness of innocency itself might have been perfected.

Thus we see how true religion carries up the souls of good men above the black regions of hell and death. This, indeed, is the great restitution of souls: it is religion itself, or a real participation of God and His holiness, which is their true restitution and advancement. All that happiness which good men shall be made partakers of, as it cannot be borne up upon any other foundation than true goodness, and a godlike nature within them, so neither is it distinct from it. Sin and hell are so twined and twisted up together, that if the power of sin be once dissolved, the bonds of death and hell will also fall asunder. Sin and hell are of the same kind, of the same lineage and descent: as, on the other side, true holiness or religion, and true happiness, are but two several notions of one thing, rather than distinct in themselves. Religion delivers us from hell, by instating us in a possession of true life and bliss. Hell is rather a nature than a place: and heaven cannot be so truly defined by any thing without us, as by something that is within us.

Thus have we done with those particulars, wherein we

considered the excellency and nobleness of religion, which is here expressed by "The way of life," and elsewhere is styled by Solomon "A tree of life:" true religion being an inward principle of life, of a divine life, the best life, that which is life, most properly so called: accordingly, in the holy Scripture, a life of religion is styled life, as a life of sin and wickedness is styled death. In the ancient academical philosophy it was much disputed, whether that corporeal and animal life, which was always drawing down the soul into terrene and material things, was not more properly to be styled death than life. What sense hereof the Pythagoreans had, may appear by this practice of theirs: they were wont to set up cenotaphs—empty coffins, in the places of those that had forsaken their school, and degenerated from their philosophy and good precepts, as being apostates from life itself, and dead to virtue and a good life, which is the true life, and, therefore, fit only to be reckoned among the dead.

For a conclusion of this discourse. The use which we shall make of all shall be this—to awaken and exhort every one to a serious minding of religion; as Solomon doth earnestly exhort every one to seek after true wisdom, which is the same with religion and holiness, as sin is with folly: "Get wisdom, get understanding;" and "Get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing." This is the sum of all, the conclusion of the whole matter, "Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty," business,

and concernment "of man." Let us not trifle away our time and opportunities which God hath given us, wherein we may lay hold upon life and immortality, in doing nothing, or else pursuing hell and death. Let us awake out of our vain dreams: wisdom calls upon us, and offers us the hidden treasures of life and blessedness: let us not perpetually deliver ourselves over to laziness and slumbering. Say not, "There is a lion in the way;" say not, though religion be good, yet it is unattainable: no—but let us unite all our powers in a serious, resolved, pursuance of it, and depend upon the assistance of heaven, which never fails those that soberly seek for it. It is, indeed, the levity of men's spirits, their heedlessness and regardlessness of their own lives, that betrays them to sin and death. It is the general practice of men "to live from hand to mouth" as the satirist speaks: they ordinarily ponder and deliberate upon everything more than how it becomes them to live; they so live as if their bodies had swallowed up their souls; their lives are but a kind of lottery; the principles by which they are guided are nothing else but a confused multitude of fancies rudely jumbled together. Such is the life of most men: it is but a mere casual thing acted over at peradventure, without any fair and calm debates held either with religion, or with reason, which in itself, as it is not distorted and depraved by corrupt men, is a true friend to religion, and directs men to God, and to things good and just, pure, lovely, and praiseworthy; and the

directions of this inward guide we are not to neglect. Unreasonableness, or the smothering and extinguishing the candle of the Lord within us, is no piece of religion, nor advantageous to it : that, certainly, will not raise men up to God, which sinks them below men. There had never been such an apostasy from religion, nor had such a mystery of iniquity, full of deceivableness and imposture, been revealed and wrought so powerfully in the souls of some men, had there not first come an apostasy from sober reason, had there not first been a falling away and departure from natural truth.

It is to be feared our nice speculations about a free will in theology, have tended more to exercise men's wits than to reform their lives, and that they have too much descended into their practice, and have tended rather to take men off from minding religion, than to quicken them up to a diligent seeking after it. Though the powers of nature may now be weakened, and though we cannot produce a living form of religion in our own souls ; yet we are not surely so resolved into a sluggish passiveness, as that we cannot, or were not, in any kind or manner of way, to seek after it. Certainly, a man may as well read the Scriptures as study a piece of Aristotle, or of natural philosophy, or mathematics. He that can observe anything comely and commendable, or unworthy and base, in another man, may also reflect upon himself, and see how "face answereth to face," as Solomon speaks. If men would seriously commune with their hearts, their own

consciences would tell them plainly, that they might avoid and omit more evil than they do, and that they might do more good than they do: and that they do not put forth that power which God hath given them, nor faithfully use those talents, nor improve the advantages and means afforded them.

I fear the ground of most men's misery will prove to be a second fall, and a lapse upon a lapse. I doubt God will not allow that proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," as not in respect of temporal misery, much less will He allow it in respect of eternal. It will not be so much because our first parents incurred God's displeasure, as because we have neglected what might have been done by us afterwards, in order to the seeking of God's face and favour, while He might be found.

Up then, and be doing, and the Lord will be with us. He will not leave us nor forsake us, if we seriously set ourselves about the work. Let us endeavour to acquaint ourselves with our own lives, and the true rules of life, with this which Solomon here calls "the way of life:" let us inform our minds, as much as may be, in the excellency and loveliness of practical religion; that, beholding it in its own beauty and amiableness, we may the more sincerely close with it. As there would need nothing else to deter and affright men from sin, but its own ugliness and deformity, were it presented to a naked view and seen as it is; so, nothing would more effectually commend

religion to the minds of men, than the displaying and unfolding the excellencies of its nature, than the true native beauty and inward lustre of religion itself: neither the evening, nor the morning, star could so sensibly commend itself to our bodily eyes, and delight them with its shining beauties, as true religion (which is an undefiled beam of the uncreated light) would to a mind capable of conversing with it. Religion, which is the true wisdom, is as the author of the book of Wisdom speaks of wisdom, "a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness: she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it."*

Religion is no such austere, sour, and rigid thing, as to affright men away from it: no: but those that are acquainted with the power of it, find it to be altogether sweet and amiable. A holy soul sees so much of the glory of religion, in the lively impressions which it bears upon itself, as both woos and wins it. We may truly say, concerning religion, to such souls, as St. Paul spake to the Corinthians, "Needs it any epistles of commendation to you?" Needs it anything to court your affections? "Ye are indeed its epistle, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

* Wisd. vii. 25. 26. 29.

Religion is not like the prophet's roll, sweet as honey, when it was in his mouth, but as bitter as gall in his belly. Religion is no sullen Stoicism, no sour Pharisaism: it does not consist in a few melancholy passions, in some dejected looks or depressions of mind; but it consists in freedom, love, peace, life, and power; the more it comes to be digested into our lives, the more sweet and lovely we shall find it to be. Those spots and wrinkles which corrupt minds think they see in the face of religion, are, indeed, nowhere else but in their own deformed and misshapen apprehensions. It is no wonder when a defiled fancy comes to be the glass, if you have an unlovely reflection. Let us therefore labour to purge our own souls from all worldly pollutions; let us breathe after the aid and assistance of the Divine Spirit, that it may irradiate and enlighten our minds, that we may be able to see divine things in a divine light: let us endeavour to live more in a real practice of those rules of religious and holy living, commended to us by our ever-blessed Lord and Saviour: so we shall know religion better, and knowing it, love it; and, loving it, be still more and more ambitiously pursuing after it, till we come to a full attainment of it, and, therein, of our own perfection and everlasting bliss.

A CHRISTIAN'S

CONFLICTS AND CONQUESTS;

OR

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

THE DEVIL'S ACTIVE ENMITY AND CONTINUAL HOSTILITY AGAINST MAN.—THE WARFARE OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.—THE CERTAINTY OF SUCCESS AND VICTORY IN THIS SPIRITUAL WARFARE.—THE EVIL AND HORRIDNESS OF MAGICAL ARTS AND RITES, DIABOLICAL CONTRACTS, &c.

A CHRISTIAN'S
CONFLICTS AND CONQUESTS

REPRESENTED IN A DISCOURSE UPON

JAMES IV. 7.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

CHAPTER I.

The introduction, summarily treating of the perpetual enmity between God, the principle of good—and the principle of evil, the devil: as also between whatsoever is from God, and that which is from the devil. That wicked men, by destroying what there is from God within them, and divesting themselves of all that which hath any alliance to God or true goodness, and transforming themselves into the diabolical image, fit themselves for correspondence and converse with the devil. The fears and horrors which infest both the apostate spirits and wicked men. The weakness of the devil's kingdom: Christ's success against it.

IT hath been an ancient tradition received by the Gentile philosophers, that there are two main principles, that spend and spread their influence through the whole universe: the one they called *the principle of good*, the other they called *the principle of evil:* and that these two maintain a continual contest and an enmity the one with the other. *The principle of goodness*, which is nothing

else but God Himself, who derived Himself in clear and lovely stamps and impressions of beauty and goodness through the whole creation, endeavours still to assimilate and unite it to Himself. And, on the other side, *the principle of evil*, the prince of darkness, having once stained the original beauty and glory of the Divine workmanship, is continually striving to mould and shape it more and more into his own likeness. And as there is such a perpetual and active enmity between God and the evil spirit: so, whatsoever is from God is perpetually opposing and warring against that which arises from the devil. The Divine Goodness hath put enmity between whatsoever is born of Him, or flows forth from Himself, and the seed of the serpent. As at the beginning He divided between the night and the day, between light and darkness, so that they can never intermingle or comply one with another, or be reconciled one to the other; so neither can those beams of Divine light and love, which descend from God upon the souls of men, be ever reconciled to those foul and filthy mists of sin and darkness, which ascend out of the bottomless pit of hell and death. That spirit is not from God, "who is the Father of lights, and in whom there is no darkness," as the apostle speaks, which endeavours to compound with hell, and to accommodate between God and the devil. God Himself hath set the bounds to darkness and the shadow of death. Divine truth and goodness cannot contract themselves with any thing that is from hell, or espouse themselves to

any child of darkness: as it was set forth in the emblem under the old law, where none of the holy seed might marry with the people of any strange God. Though that rule, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," be abolished in the symbolical rites, yet hath it an immutable mystery in it, not subject to the laws or changes of time.

He that will entertain any correspondence with the devil, or receive upon his soul his image or the number of his name, must first divest and strip himself of all that which hath any alliance to God or true goodness within him: he must transform his mind into the true likeness and similitude of those foul fiends of darkness, and abandon all relation to the highest and supremest good. And yet, though some men endeavour to do this, and to smother all those impressions of light and reason, which God hath folded up in every man's being, and destroy all that which is from God within them, that so they may reconcile themselves to sin and hell; yet can they never make any just peace with them: "There is no peace to the wicked, but they are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Those evil spirits are always turbulent and restless; and though they maintain, continually, a war with God and His kingdom, yet are they always making disquietings and disturbances in their own kingdom; and the more they contest with God, and are deprived of Him, the more full are they of horror and tumultuous commotions within. Nothing can stand firm and sure, nothing can have any true and quiet

establishment, that hath not the everlasting arms of true goodness under it to support it. And as those that deliver over themselves most to the devil's pleasure, and devote themselves to his service, cannot do it without a secret, inward antipathy against him, or dreadful thoughts of him; so neither can those impure spirits stand before the Divine glory; but, being filled with trembling and horror, continually endeavour to hide themselves from it, and flee away before it as the darkness flies away before the light. And according as God hath, in any places, in any ages of the world, made any manifestations of Himself to men, so have those evil spirits been vanquished, and forced to quit their former territories; as is especially very observable in the ceasing of all the Grecian oracles soon after the gospel was promulged in those parts, when those desolate spirits, with horrid and dismal groans, resigned up their habitations, as Plutarch hath recorded of them.

Our Saviour hath found, by good experience, how weak a thing the devil's kingdom is, when He "spoiled all the principalities and powers of darkness, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in (or, by) it," that is, His cross, as the apostle speaks: and if we will resolutely follow "the Captain of our salvation," and fight under His banner, "as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," we have full security given us for the same success: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

CHAPTER II.

The first observable, That the devil is continually busy with us. The devil considered under a double notion. 1. *As an apostate spirit which fell from God. The great danger of the devil's activity, not only when he presents himself in some corporeal shape, but when he is unseen and appears not. The weakness and folly of those who are afraid of him, only when he appears embodied. That the good Spirit of God is active for the good of souls. How regardless men are of the gentle motions of the Divine Spirit; and how unwatchful and secure under the suggestions of the evil spirit. How we may discover the devil in his stratagems, and under his several disguises and appearances.*

IN these words, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," we shall take notice, *first*, of what is evidently implied, *viz. That the devil is continually busy with us.* This may be considered under a double notion.

1. By the devil, we are to understand that apostate spirit which fell from God, and is always designing to hale down others from God also. The old dragon, mentioned in the Revelation, with his tail drew down the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. As true goodness is not content to be happy alone; so neither can sin and wickedness be content to be miserable alone. The evil spirit told God Himself what his employment was, *viz.* "To go to and fro in the earth, and to walk up and down in it:" he is always walking up and down "through dry places," (where no divine influences fall to water it) as our Saviour speaks, "seeking rest," though always restless. The philosophy of the

ancients hath observed, that every man that comes into this world hath a good and an evil genius attending upon him. It were, perhaps, a vain curiosity to inquire whether the number of evil spirits exceed the number of men: but this is too, too certain, that we never want the secret and latent attendance of them. The devil is not only a word or a name made to affright or scare timorous men with; neither are we then only in danger of him, when he presents himself to us in some corporeal form: it is nothing else but a superstitious weakness to be afraid of him only then when he appears embodied, and to neglect that unseen and insensible influence, which his continual converse with us, as an unbodied spirit, may have upon us. Those evil spirits are not yet cast out of the world into outer darkness, though it be prepared for them: the bottomless pit hath not yet shut its mouth upon them. They fell from God, not so much by a local descent, as by a mental apostasy and dissimilitude to God: and they are now *in libera custodia*, having all this habitable world for their rendezvous, and are styled, by the apostle, "spiritual wickednesses in high places." Wheresoever there are any in a disposition to sin against God, wheresoever there are any capable of a temptation or diabolical impression, here and there are they. A man needs not dig into the chambers of death, or search among the shadows of darkness to find them: he needs not go down into hell to seek them, or use any magical charms to raise them up from thence: no; those wicked and impure spirits are

always wandering up and down amongst us, seeking whom they may devour. As there is a good spirit conversant in the world, inviting and alluring men to virtue and goodness; so there is an evil spirit, perpetually tempting and enticing men to sin and vice. Unclothed and unbodied natures may converse with us by secret illapses, while we are not aware of them. I doubt not but there are many more Divine impressions made upon the minds of men, both good and bad, from the good Spirit of God, than are ordinarily observed: there are many soft and silent impulses, gentle motions, like our Saviour's "putting in his hand by the hole of the door," as it is in the Canticles—soliciting and exciting men to religion and holiness; which they many times regard not, and take little notice of.

There are such secret messages often brought from heaven to the souls of men, by an unknown and unseen hand, as the Psalmist speaks; "Once, yea, twice have I heard it, that power belongeth unto God." And as there are such Divine irradiations sliding into the souls of men from God: so there are, no question, many and frequent suggestions to the fancies and imaginations of men, arising from the evil spirit; and a watchful observer of his own heart and life shall often hear the voice of wisdom, and the voice of folly, speaking to him: he that hath his eyes opened, may see both the visions of God falling upon him, and discern the false and foolish fires of Satan, that would draw away his mind from God. This is our un-

happiness, that the devil is so near us, and we see him not: he is conversant with us, and yet we are not aware of him. Those are the most desperate designs, and likeliest to take effect, that are carried on by an unseen and unappearing enemy: and, if we will provide ourselves against the devil, who never misseth any opportunity that lies in his way to tempt us, nor is ever failing in any plot, we must then have our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil:" we must get our minds awakened with clear and evident principles of light: we must get our judgments and consciences well informed with sober and practical truth, such as tends to make us most like to God, and to reconcile our natures more perfectly to Divine goodness. Then shall we know and discover that apostate spirit in all his stratagems, whereby he seeks to bereave us of our happiness: we shall know him as well, when he clothes himself like an angel of light, as when he appears in his own nakedness and deformity. It is observed by some, that God never suffered the devil to assume any human shape, but with some character whereby his body might be distinguished from the true body of a man: and surely the devil cannot so exactly counterfeit an angel of light, but that, by a discerning mind, he may be distinguished from him; as they say a beggar can never act a prince so cunningly, but that his behaviour, sometimes sliding into the course, way, and principles of his education, will betray the meanness of his pedigree to one of a truly noble extraction. A bare imi-

tation will always fall short of the copy from whence it is taken; and though sin and error may take up the mantle of truth, and clothe themselves with it, yet he that is inwardly acquainted with truth, and an ingenuous lover and pursuer of it, will be able to find out the imposture; he will be able to see, through the veil, into the naked deformity of them.

CHAPTER III.

2. Of the activity of the devil, considered as a spirit of apostasy, and as a degenerate nature in men. That the devil is not only the name of one particular thing, but a nature. The difference between the devil and wicked men is rather the difference of a name than of natures. The kingdom and tyranny of the devil and hell is chiefly within, in the qualities and dispositions of men's minds. Men are apt to quarrel with the devil in the name and notion, and defy him with their tongues, while they entertain him in their hearts, and comply with all that which the devil is. The vanity of their pretended love to God, and hatred of the devil. That there is nothing better than God Himself, for which we should love Him; and to love Him for His own beauty and excellency is the best way of loving Him. That there is nothing worse than sin itself, for which we should hate it; and to hate it for its own deformity is the truest way of hating it. How hell and misery arise from within men. Why wicked men are so insensible in their misery in this life.

WHEN we say, the devil is continually busy with us, I mean not only some apostate spirit as one particular being, but that spirit of apostasy which is lodged in all men's natures; and this may seem particularly to

be aimed at in this place, if we observe the context: as the Scripture speaks of Christ, not only as a particular person, but as a Divine principle in holy souls.

Indeed, the devil is not only the name of one particular thing, but a nature: he is not so much one particular being, designed to torment wicked men in the world to come, as a hellish and diabolical nature seated in the minds of men. He is not only one apostate spirit fallen down from heaven out of the lap of blessedness; but also a spirit of apostasy, a degenerate and depraved nature. Could the devil change his foul and impure nature, he would neither be a devil nor miserable; and so long as any man carries about him a sinful and corrupt nature, he can neither be in perfect favour with God, nor blessed. Wickedness is the form and *entelech* of all the wicked spirits: it is the difference of a name, rather than any proper difference of natures, that is between the devil and wicked men. Wheresoever we see malice, revenge, pride, envy, hatred, self-will, and self-love, we may say here, and there, is that evil spirit. This, indeed, is that *venenum serpentis*—the poison and sting, too, of that diabolical nature. As the kingdom of heaven is not so much without men as within, as our Saviour tell us; so the tyranny of the devil and hell is not so much in some external things, as in the qualities and dispositions of men's minds. And as the enjoying of God, and conversing with Him, consists not so much in a change of place, as in the participation of the Divine nature, and in our

assimilation unto God; so our conversing with the devil is not so much by a mutual local presence, as by an imitation of a wicked and sinful nature derived upon men's own souls. Therefore, the Jews were wont to style that original pravity that is lodged in men's spirits "the angel of death" and fiend of darkness. Those filthy lusts and corruptions which men foment and entertain in their minds, are the noisome vapours that ascend out of the bottomless pit: they are the thick mists and fogs of hellish darkness arising in their souls, as a preface and introduction of hell and death within. Where we find uncleanness, intemperance, covetousness, or any such impure or unhallowed behaviour, we may say: "Here Satan's throne is."

This sinful and corrupt nature, being the true issue of hell itself, is continually dragging down men's souls thither. All sin and wickedness in man's spirit hath the central force and energy of hell in it, and is perpetually pressing down towards it, as towards its own place. There needs no fatal necessity, or astral impulses, to tumble wicked men down forcibly into hell: no; for sin itself, hastened by the mighty weight of its own nature, carries them down thither with the most swift and headlong motion. As they say of true holiness and Christianity, *Christi sarcina pennas habet*—Christ's burden, which is nothing else but true godliness, is a winged thing, and bravely bears itself upwards upon its own wings, soaring aloft towards God; so we may say of all impiety, *diaboli*

sarcina pondus habet—the devilish nature is always within the central attractions of hell, and its own weight instigates and accelerates its motion thither. He that allows himself in any sin, or useth any unnatural dalliance with any vice, does nothing else, in reality, than entertain an *incubus dæmon:* he prostitutes a wanton soul, and forces it to commit lewdness with the devil himself. Sin is nothing better than the offspring of darkness and deformity: it hath no other extraction or pedigree than may be derived from those unclean spirits that are nestled in hell. All men, in reality, converse either with God or with the devil, and walk in the confines either of heaven or of hell: they have their fellowship either with the Father and the Son, as St. John speaks; or else, with the apostate and evil angels.

I know these expressions will seem to some very harsh and unwelcome; but I would beseech them to consider what they will call that spirit of malice and envy, that spirit of pride, ambition, vain-glory, covetousness, injustice, uncleanness, &c. that commonly reigns so much, and acts so violently, in the minds and lives of men. Let us speak the truth, and call things by their own names: let us not flatter ourselves, or paint our filthy sores: so much as there is of sin in any man, so much there is of the old man, so much there is of the diabolical nature. Why do we defy the devil so much with our tongues, while we entertain him in our hearts? But, indeed, men do but quarrel with him in the name and notion of him,

while yet their hearts can readily comply with all that which the devil is: that antipathy which is ordinarily expressed against him, like those natural antipathies which the philosophers speak of, being nothing else but occult qualities, or natural instincts, which as they arise not from any principle of reason or understanding, so neither are they guided or governed by it. As men's love to God is ordinarily nothing else but the mere tendency of their natures to something that hath the notion or name of God put upon it, without any clear or distinct apprehension of Him; so their hatred of the devil is commonly nothing else but an inward displacency of nature against something entitled by the devil's name. Or else, at best, corrupt minds do nothing else but fashion out a God and a devil, a heaven and a hell, to themselves, by the power of their own fancies; and so, they are to them nothing else but their own creatures, sustained and supported by the force of their own imaginations which first raised them. And as they commonly make a god like to themselves, such a one as they can best comply with and love; so they make a devil most unlike to themselves, which may be any thing but what they themselves are, that so they may most freely spend their anger and hatred upon him: just as they say of some of the Æthiopians, who used to paint the devil white, because they themselves are black. This is a strange, merry, kind of madness, whereby men sportingly bereave themselves of the supremest good, and insure themselves, as much as may be, to hell

and misery: they may thus cheat themselves for a while, but the eternal foundation of the Divine being is immutable and unchangeable. God is but "one, and His name one," as the prophet speaks, howsoever the several fancies of men may shape Him out diversely; and where we find wisdom, justice, loveliness, goodness, love and glory, in their highest elevations, and most unbounded dimensions, there is He: and where we find any true participations of these, there is a true communication of God; and a defection from these is the essence of sin, and the foundation of hell.

Now, if this be rightly considered, I hope there will appear an argument strong enough, from the thing itself, to enforce St. James' exhortation, "resist the devil:" endeavour to mortify and crucify the old man, with all the corrupt lusts and affections of the flesh.

We never so truly hate sin, as when we hate it for its own ugliness and deformity: as we never love God so truly, as when we love Him for his own beauty and excellency. If we calculate aright, as we shall find nothing better than God Himself, for which we should love Him; so neither shall we find any thing worse than sin itself, for which we should hate it. Our assimilation to God and conformity to Him, instates us in a firm possession of true happiness, which is nothing else but God Himself, who is all being and blessedness; and our dissimilitude to God, and apostasy from Him, involves us in our own misery, and sets us at the greatest enmity to what

our unsatiable desires most of all crave for, which is the enjoyment of true and satisfying good. Sins are those fiery snakes which will eternally lash and torment all damned spirits. Every man's hell arises from the bottom of his own soul; as those stinking mists, and tempestuous exhalations, that infest the earth, have their first original from the earth itself. Those streams of fire and brimstone, ordained for the torment of all damned spirits, are rather the exudations of their own filthy and corrupt nature, than any external thing. Hell is not so much induced, as educed out of men's filthy lusts and passions. I will not here dispute what external appendices there may be of heaven or hell; but, methinks, I no where find a more graphical description of the true properties and operations of them, though under other names, than in those characters of the "flesh and spirit." Eternal death is begotten and brought forth out of the womb of lust, and is little else but sin consummated, and in its full growth, as St. James intimates.

Would wicked men dwell a little more at home, and descend into the bottom of their own hearts, they would soon find hell opening her mouth wide upon them, and those secret fires of inward fury and displeasure breaking out upon them, which might fully inform them of the estate of true misery, as being a short anticipation of it. But in this life, wicked men, for the most part, elude their own misery for a time, and seek to avoid the dreadful sentence of their own consciences, by a tergiversation and

flying from themselves, into a converse with other things, *ut nemo in sese tentat descendere;* else they would soon find their own home too hot for them. But while men's minds are perpetually rambling all the world over, in a pursuit of worldly designs, they are unacquainted with the affairs of their own souls; and know not how deeply a self-converse, and reflection upon their own prodigious deformities, would pierce their souls with anguish; how vastly they would swell with fury, rage, horror, consternation, and whatsoever is contrary to that ineffable light, and love, and peace, which are in heaven, in natures fully reconciled and united to true goodness. As true goodness cannot borrow beauty from any external thing, to recommend itself to the minds and affections of good men, seeing itself is the very idea and true life of all beauty and perfection, the source of bliss and peace to all that partake of her; so neither can sin and wickedness, to an enlightened soul, appear more ugly, loathsome, and hateful in any other shape than its own.

CHAPTER IV.

The second observable, viz. The warfare of a Christian life. True religion consists not in a mere passive capacity, and sluggish kind of doing nothing, nor in a melancholy sitting still or slothful waiting, &c., but it consists in inward life and power, vigour and activity. A discovery of the dulness and erroneousness of that hypothesis, viz. That good men are wholly passive, and unable, at any time, to move without some external impetus—*some impression and impulse from without upon them: or, that all motions in religion are from an external principle. Of the quality and nature of the true spiritual warfare, and of the manner and method of it. That it is transacted upon the inner stage of men's souls, and managed without noise or pompous observation; and without any hinderance or prejudice to the most peaceful, sedate, and composed temper of a religious soul. This further illustrated from the consideration of the false and pretended zeal for God and His kingdom, against the devil; which, though it be impetuous, and make a great noise and a fair show in the world, is yet both impotent and ineffectual.*

2. FROM these words, "resist the devil," we may take notice of *the warfare of a Christian life*—of that active life and valour which good men express in this world. A true Christian spirit is masculine and generous: it is no such poor, sluggish, pusillanimous thing as some men fancy it to be, but active and noble. "We fight not," saith the apostle, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places." True religion does not consist in a mere passive capacity—in a sluggish kind of doing nothing, that so God Himself might do all; but it consists in life

and power within: therefore it is called by the apostle, "The spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind:" it is called "the law of the spirit of life," strongly enabling good men against "the law of sin and death." True wisdom, as the wise man hath well styled it, is "the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty; neither can any defiled thing enter into it:" it goes in and out in the strength of God Himself; and "as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Every thing, as it partakes more of God, and comes nearer to Him, so it becomes more active and lively, as making the nearer approaches to the Fountain of life and virtue. A good man does not only then move, when there is some powerful impression and impulse upon him; but he has a spring of perpetual motion within. When God restores men to a new and a Divine life, He does not make them like so many dead instruments, stringing and fitting them, which yet are able to yield no sound of themselves; but He puts a living harmony within them. That is but a mechanical religion, which moves no longer than some external weights and impulses are upon it, whether those be, I think I may safely say, from some worldly thing, or from God Himself, while He acts upon men from without them, and not from within them. It is not a melancholy kind of sitting still, and slothful waiting, that speaks men enlivened by the Spirit and power of God. It is not religion to stifle and smother those active powers and

principles which are within us, or to dry up the fountain of inward life and virtue. How say some amongst us, that there is no resurrection from the dead? no spirit or life within; but that all our motions in religion are merely from some assisting form without? Good men do not walk up and down the world, merely like ghosts and shadows, or like dead bodies assumed by some spirit, which are taken up and laid down again by him at his pleasure: but they are, indeed, living men, by a real participation from Him who is, indeed, a quickening Spirit. Were our religion so much a thing without us as some men would seem to fancy it; were we so dead and lifeless, as that we would never move but from an external *impetus;* as our religion could never, indeed, be called ours, so neither could we ever have the inward sense of that bliss and peace which go along with it; but we must be like so many heavy logs, or dull pieces of earth, in heaven and happiness. That is a very earthly and flat spirit in religion, which sinks, like the lees, to the bottom; or rather, it is like that *terra damnata* which the Chymists speak of, having no vigour, life, or activity left in it, being truly dead to God, and reprobate to any thing of heaven. We know the pedigree of those exhalations that arise no higher than a merely external force from the sun's heat weigheth them up, to be but base and earthly; and, therefore, having no natural warmth or energy within themselves imparted to them, they sink down again to the earth from whence they came. The spirit which is from

heaven is always, out of an inbred nobleness which bears it up, carried upwards again towards heaven, from whence it came, powerfully resisting all things that would deprive it of God, or hinder it from returning to its original: it is always moving upwards in an even and steady way towards God, from whence it came, leaving the dark regions of hell and death under it: it resists hell and darkness by assimilating and conforming itself to God: it resists darkness in the armour of light: it resists death and destruction by the power of Divine love. It must be something of heaven in the minds of men, which must resist the devil and hell.

We do not always "resist the devil," when we bid defiance to him, or when we declaim most zealously against him; neither does our resisting and opposing of sin and wickedness consist in the violence of some feminine passions, which may sometimes be raised by the power of fancy in the minds of men against it; but it consists rather in a mature and sedate resolution against it in our own souls, arising from a clear judgment of the foul and hateful nature of sin itself, and him who is the patron of it; in a constant and serious endeavour of settling the government of our own souls, and establishing the principality of grace and peace within ourselves. There is a pompous and popular kind of tumult in the world, which sometimes goes for zeal to God and His kingdom against the devil; when men's own pride and passions disguise themselves under the notions of a reli-

gious fervency. Some men think themselves the greatest champions for God and His cause, when they can take the greatest liberty to quarrel with every thing abroad, and without themselves, which is not shaped according to the mould of their own opinions, their own self-will, humour, and interest: whereas, indeed this spiritual warfare is not so much maintained against a foreign enemy, as against those domestic rebellions that are within: neither is it then carried on most successfully, when men make the greatest noise, and most of all raise the dust. That impetuous violence and tempestuousness, with which men are actuated in pretensions of religion, arises ordinarily, I doubt, from unquiet and undisturbed minds within: whereas it is, indeed, the inward conflicts and commotions, sin and vice, and not a holy zeal for God, which discompose the minds of men. Sin, where it is entertained, will indeed breed disturbance, and break the peace of a man's own spirit; but a true resisting and opposing of it is the restoring of the soul to its just consistency, freedom, and serenity again. As God's kingdom is set up, so the devil's kingdom may be pulled down, without the noise of axes and hammers. We may then attain to the greatest achievements against the gates of hell and death, when we most of all possess our own souls in patience, and collect our minds into the most peaceful, composed, and united temper. The motions of true practical religion are most like that of the heavens, which, though most swift, is yet most silent. As grace and true

religion is no lazy or sluggish thing, but in perpetual motion; so all the motions of it are soft and gentle: while it acts most powerfully within, it also acts most peacefully. "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation," that men may say, "Lo here, or lo there:" it is not with the devouring fire coming after it, or a whirlwind going before it. This fight and contest with sin and Satan is not to be known by the rattling of the chariots, or the sound of an alarm: it is, indeed, alone transacted upon the inner stage of men's souls and spirits; and is rather a pacifying and quieting of all those riots and tumults raised there by sin and Satan: it is rather a reconciling the minds of men to truth, justice, and holiness: it is a captivating and subjecting all our powers and faculties to God and true goodness, through the effectual working of a Divine love and humility; and this resistance is always attended with victory, and triumph waits upon this fight —which is the third and last observation we shall make upon these words.

CHAPTER V.

The third observable, viz. The certainty of success and victory to all those that resist the devil. This grounded upon 1. *The weakness of the devil and sin, considered in themselves.* 2. *God's Powerful assisting of all faithful Christians in this warfare. The devil may allure and tempt, but he cannot prevail, except men consent and yield to his suggestions. The devil's strength lies in men's treachery and falseness to their own souls. Sin is strong, because men oppose it weakly. The error of the Manichees, about a* principium mali, *defended by men in their lives and practices. Of God's readiness to assist Christians in their spiritual conflicts; His compassionate regards, and the more special respects of His providence, towards them on such occasions. The conclusion, discovering the evil and horridness of magic diabolical contracts, &c.*

3. THE *certainty of success to all those that resist the devil*—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He cannot stand, when opposed in the strength of God; he will fall down as swift as lightning; he cannot bear the glory of God shining in the souls of men. Here it is no more but stand, and conquer; resist, and vanquish.

For, *first* of all, the devil and sin, in themselves considered, are but weak and impotent: they cannot prevail over that soul which yields not to them: the evil spirit then only prevails over us, when we ourselves consent to his suggestions: all his strength lies in our treachery and falseness to our own souls. Though those wicked spirits be perpetually so near us, yet cannot they bow or bend our wills: there is a place of defence in the souls of men,

into which they cannot enter: they may stand at a distance, allure, and entice them; but they cannot prevail over them, except they wilfully and shamefully deliver over their strength into the enemy's hand. It is, indeed, nothing else but hell itself in the souls of men, that gives the devil such free entertainment there: the wills of men, stamped with a diabolical form, and bearing the devil's image and inscription upon them, declare his right over them. Men are therefore so much captivated by him, because they voluntarily take his yoke upon them. Could we, or would we, resist sin and Satan, they could not hurt us. Every thing is weak and impotent, according to the distance it stands from God, who is the only fountain of life and power; and, therefore, it was well resolved by the philosopher*—"Sin in itself is a weak and impotent thing, and proceeds from weakness;" it consists not properly in any native power and strength which it hath within itself, but in an impotency, and privation of all true being and perfection; and, therefore, wheresoever any thing of God appears, it will destroy it. He that is born of God, shall overcome the world, the devil, and sin; for "the seed of God remaineth in him."

Let us endeavour to get our minds enlightened with Divine truth—clear and practical truth; let us earnestly endeavour after a true participation of the Divine nature; and then shall we find hell and death flee away before us.

* Simplicius.

Let us not impute the fruits of our own sluggishness to the power of the evil spirit without, or to God's neglecting of us: say not, "Who shall stand against those mighty giants?" No: arm thyself with the mind of Christ—a fixed resolution to serve the will and pleasure of the Almighty; and then fear not what sin and hell can do against thee. Open thy windows, thou sluggard, and let in the beams of Divine light, that are there waiting upon thee, till thou awake out of thy slothfulness; then shalt thou find the shadows of the night dispelled and scattered, and the warm beams of light and love infolding thee, which the higher they arise above the horizon of thy soul, the more fully they will display their native strength and beauty upon thee, transforming thee more and more from darkness to light, from the similitude of Satan into a participation of the Divine image. The devil is not to be kept off from us by setting any spell about us, or driven away from us by any magical charms. We need not go and beat the air, to drive away those evil spirits from about us; as Herodotus reports the Caunians once to have beaten out the strange gods from amongst them: but let us turn within ourselves, and beat down that pride and passion, those holds of Satan there, which are therefore strong, because we oppose them weakly. Sin is nothing else but a degeneration from true goodness, conceived by a dark and cloudy understanding, and brought forth by a corrupt will: it hath no consistency in itself, or foundation of its own to support it. What the Jews

have observed of error, is true of all sin, *Mendacium non habet pedes*—"it hath no feet," no basis of its own, to subsist and rest itself upon. Let us withdraw our will and affections from it, and it will soon fall into nothing. It was the fond error of the Manichees, that there was some solid *principium mali*, which having an eternal existence of its own, had also a mighty and uncontrollable power from within itself, whereby it could forcibly enter and penetrate into the souls of men; and, seating itself there, by some hidden influences, irresistibly incline and inforce them to evil: which error I wish were as well confuted by the lives and practices of men, as it hath been by the writings, both of fathers and philosophers. But it is too apparent that men maintain that lie by a compliance with the diabolical powers: we ourselves uphold that kingdom of darkness, which else would tumble down and slide into that nothing from whence it came. All truth and goodness are of an eternal nature: they are one, and unchangeable, subsisting upon the strength of Omnipotency; but all sin and vice is our own creature; we only give life to them which, indeed, are our death, and would soon wither and fade away, did we subtract our concurrence from them.

Secondly. We have a further ground for our expectation of victory in all contests with sin and Satan, from the powerful assistance of God Himself, who is never wanting to those that seek after Him, and never fails those that engage in His quarrels. While we strive

against sin, we may safely expect that the Divinity itself will strive with us, and derive that strength and power into us that shall, at last, make us more than conquerors. God hath not forsaken the earth; but as His Almighty essence runs through all things, sustaining and upholding the frame of the whole universe; so, more especially, does it bear up, in its Almighty arms, those things that are more nearly related to Himself, always cherishing them with His own goodness. Wheresoever God beholds any breathings after Himself, He gives life to them, as those which are His own breath in them. As he who projects wickedness, shall be sure to find Satan standing at his right hand, ready to assist him in it: so he that pursues after God and holiness, shall find God nearer to him than he is to himself, in the free and liberal communications of Himself to him. He that goes out in God's battles, fighting under our Saviour's banner, may look upwards, and, opening his eyes, may see the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire round about him. God hath not so much delight in the death and destruction of men, as to see them struggling and contending for life, and Himself stand by as a looker on. No: but, with the most tender and fatherly compassions, His bowels yearn over them, and his Almighty arm is stretched forth for them; and in His strength they shall prevail: they shall be borne up, as upon eagles' wings; they shall walk in the might of His strength, who is able to save, and not faint. Where there is any serious and sober resolution against sin, any

real motion towards God, there is the blessing of heaven in it: He that planted it, will also water it, and make it to bud, and blossom, and bring forth fruit.

Wherefore, to shut up this discourse by way of application, let us make use of this, as a further argument, to enforce the apostle's exhortation upon ourselves: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;" and, as the Psalmist speaks of his enemies, so let us say of our spiritual enemies, "They compass me about, they compass me in on every side; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." Let us set ourselves, with all our might, to mortify the old man, and to crucify all the affections of the flesh: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," as a great and mighty conqueror, who will declare the perfection of His own power in our weakness, if we lay hold of His strength. Though we are not able to change our own natures, or to rise above the source of our animal and selfish beings, by our own power; yet let us endeavour to subdue all those external vices of luxury and wantonness, of injustice, revenge, and the like: let us withdraw the fuel of pride, malice, vainglory, and whatsoever else holds us in captivity to hell, and with confidence apply ourselves to Him who is an Almighty Saviour; and when He joins His Almighty strength with us, we need not fear anything: "He shall

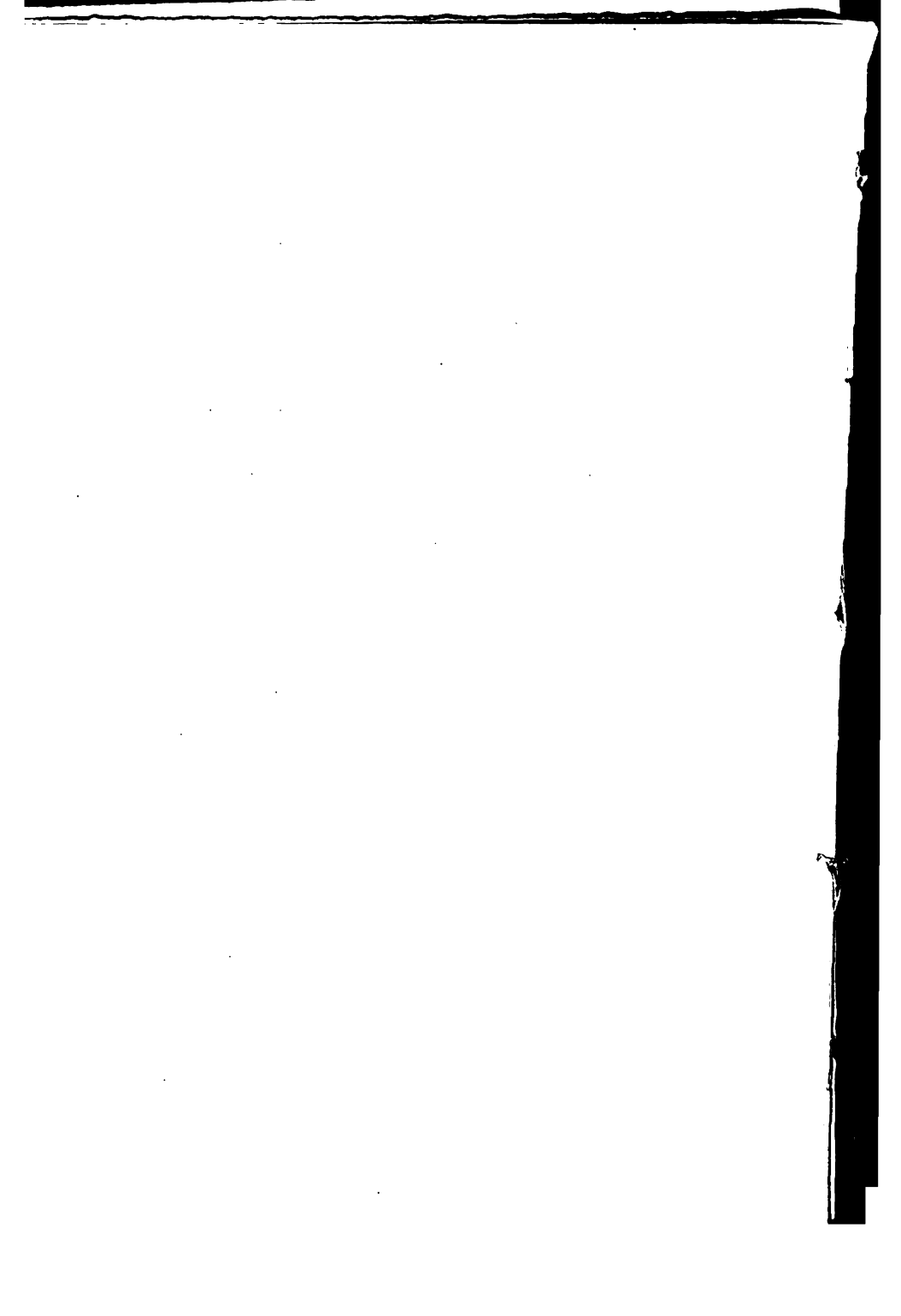
tread down Satan under our feet," and we shall, one day, "tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet:" we shall break the serpent's head, though he may bruise our heel. Though God may suffer him so far to serve his own rage and the hellish malice of such as are in league with him, as to pull down, with violence, our earthly tabernacles; yet, while we so suffer by him, we are conquerors over him.

I should now conclude all, and leave you with this general application, but that the present occasion hath drawn it down for me to a particular case. Did we not live in a world of professed wickedness, wherein so many men's sins go, in open view, before them to judgment, it might be thought needless to persuade men to "resist the devil," when he appears, in his own colours, to make merchandise of them, and comes, in a formal way, to bargain with them for their souls; that which human nature, however enthralled to sin and Satan in a more mysterious way, abhors, and none admit, but those who are quite degenerated from human kind. That which I shall further add, shall be by way of caution, only to suggest two things which are the forerunners of such diabolical contracts, and put temptations into the hands of the tempter.

First. Those hellish passions of malice, envy, and revenge, which are the black form and image of the devil himself: these, when they are once ripened, fit men for the most formal converse with the devil that may be: that

nature cannot easily abhor him, which is so perfectly conformed to him.

Secondly. The use of any arts, rites, or ceremonies not understood, of which we can give no rational or divine account; this, indeed, is nothing else but a kind of magic which the devil himself owns, and gives life to, though he may not be corporeally present, or require presently any further covenant from the users of them. The devil, no question, is present at all his own rites and ceremonies, though men discern him not; and may, upon the use of them, secretly produce those effects which may gain credit to them. Among these rites, we may reckon insignificant forms of words, with their several modes and manners of pronunciation, astrological arts, and whatsoever else pretends to any strange effects, which we cannot, with good reason, either ascribe to God or nature. As God will only be conversed withal in a way of light and understanding; so the devil loves to be conversed with in a way of darkness and obscurity.

ERRATA.

Page 45.—Note, third line, for *He lives* read *He loves*.
,, 102.—First line, for *in fear* read *is fear*.
,, 103.—Eleventh line, for *virtue* read *virtute*.
,, 113.—Fourth line from foot, for *in wise* read *in no wise*.